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OLIVER CROMWELL:

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS,

BY

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T. SEATON DONOHO,

OF WASHINGTON, D. C.,

Author of "The Goldsmith of Padua," "Ivywall," "Moena," &c.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

WILLIAM H. MOORE, PRINTER.

1860.

exp.



To Col. D. Force,

With the sincere regards of

OLIVER CROMWELL:

Jan. 8. 1861.

T. Seaton Donoho.

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OLIVER CROMWELL:

A Tragedy,

IN FIVE ACTS.

Persons Represented.

OLIVER CROMWELL.

JOHN MILTON.

SIR HENRY ARDENNE, an old Cavalier.

EDGAR ARDENNE, his Son.

KING CHARLES.

LORD DIGBY, a Courtier.

LENTHALL, }
HOLLIS, } Members of Parliament.
PYM, }

SEXBY, a Lawyer.

PHYSICIAN.

ANDREW, Servant of Milton.

JOSEPH, old Servant of Sir Henry.

A PAGE.

QUEEN HENRIETTA.

MABEL, Adopted Daughter of Sir Henry.

ELIZABETH, Daughter of Milton.

JULIE, a Dancing Girl.

SPIRIT.*

Ladies of the Court, Lady Cromwell and two Daughters, Soldiers.

* Female, young and beautiful. Dress, white, simple in style, with blue scarf from right shoulder to left side. Sandals. Golden helmet, with white ostrich plumes. In her right hand a wand of gold, terminated by a silver star, set with brilliants.



OLIVER CROMWELL.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.—*Woodleigh Park. MABEL walking, with a book in her hand.*

Mab. A good and evil genius walks the world,
Each life's attendant. What may chance to me,
Edgar in Italy—and Cromwell here?
Cromwell, a clumsy, rude enthusiast,
Who, like the worst of sinners, plays the saint,
Groaning with piety! O Mabel! Mabel!
Thou art a silly girl; thy dreams are idle:
Exchange them here for flowers and fruit of wisdom.

(Reads, leaning against a tree.)

Enter EDGAR.

Edgar. The hills and vales do give me welcome home!
I greet thee, Mother England! Ho, what's here?
The lady reads. Ah me! to be the book
That so may charm those world-subduing eyes!
Mabel!

Mab. Edgar! *(They embrace.)*

Can it be truly so? Most welcome! welcome!

Edgar. This is, indeed, the music of the heart,
That I so long have sighed for!

I knew you not, at first; the change is wondrous—

Mab. Then let your wonder make you dumb about it!

Edgar. But wonder cannot live without expression;
Neither can I without— *(Kissing her.)*

Mab. Italian fashions!

Edgar. Nay, it is English—or I think it so;
If you think otherwise, translate it for me!

(Offering to kiss her again.)

Mab. Indeed, I scarcely yet can trust my eyes—

Edgar. Your lips confirm it, whatso'er it be!—

Mab. That, truant as you are, and traitor, too,
You stand before me now! So long we gazed,
For your expected, for your promised coming!

Edgar. O Mabel, did you know what anxious thoughts,
What pangs, these wearisome delays have caused,
There would be pity rather than upbraiding!

Mab. Fair words—but merely tinsel! Yet with such,
“Lords of Creation,” as you style yourselves,
You deem you brush away the heaviest score
Of broken vows from minds of simple maids!
Still, of a truth, I do not marvel wisely,
When here you dally in your father’s park,
Nor question aught of him! Good sooth, preferring
To round these fine excuses to a lady,
Who fully knows their value! Sir, for shame!
For my part, if I felt it not, I’d feign
Some natural affection!

Edgar. Nobly spoken!
But can you not, wise moralist, divine
A fit solution for the mystery?
You in the park, so blithe and beautiful,
Is full assurance all goes well at home!

Mab. Well parried, if not honestly! But come.
I warrant, had you met Sir Henry first,
You had not once inquired: “Does Mabel live?”

Edgar. I had not, if he met me with a smile!

Mab. A truce to compliments!

Edgar. Now by this hand—

Mab. You shall not have it!

Edgar. Never?

(*A hunter’s horn is heard.*)

Mab. Hark! your father!

Sir Henry, (without.) Alert! alert! you of young blood, alert!
(*EDGAR offers to go.*)

Mab. Stay!
He scarce would see you now. The hunt is forward!
And after waiting three good years, a day,
Surely, will not seem long!

Edgar. A minute is :
 Delay of duty, with the power to do it,
 Should be as brief as—

Mab. Lovers' promises ! (EDGAR walks back.)
 They perish in the breath that gives them life !

Sir H. (Nearer.) Methought I was myself full early stirring,
 But here are ye—who have been up all night !—
 Beforehand with me ! What ho ! knaves ! our breakfast !
 'Fore George, we'll make a day of it ! Where's Mabel ?

Mab. Here, sir, am I !

Enter SIR HENRY.

Sir H. Fly, Mabel—fly, my fairy !
 Do on your riding gear right speedily !
 Ariel is champing on his bit, even now,
 To summon you away ! But who is you ?

Mab. A new-found friend of mine.

Sir H. A friend of yours !

Mab. And of Sir Henry !

Sir H. Mine ? What ! what ! I'll have him
 A-horseback on the instant ! Sir, good morrow !
 (EDGAR turns toward him.)

My son ! my son ! (*Embracing, and weeping.*)
 Why, what are these ? tears ? tears ?

But I am glad to see you, 's spite of tears !
 There'll be no hunt to-day !

Edgar. O but there will,
 To honor my return !

Sir H. Ha ! say you so !
 Faith, a good thought ! Then you will ride with us ?

Mab. The moment that the traveler dismounts—
 Like a considerate and loving host,
 You ask him to the hunt !

Sir H. I had forgotten.
 Rest is for you : and Mabel—

Mab. Ariel waits :
 "Ariel is champing on his bit," Sir Henry !
 Beside, Sir Henry :
 The traveler needeth rest, and rest is none

Where there's a woman! I have heard you say so!

Sir II. A saucy jade! But like her mother, Edgar—
Though somewhat wilder! Well, time tames us all!

Edgar. Away at once, dear father, if you love me!
Assured that I am safe at home again,
Bring me, in token of fair welcome back—
A noble stag! And that I may possess
Good appetite, which is from peace of mind,
Be sure take Mabel with you!

Sir II. If you will have it so.

Enter ANDREW.

What wants you knave?

A rascally, starved roundhead!

And. (*To SIR H.*) Is this the residence of Ardenne—him men
call "Sir Henry;" cumbering their tongues with vain distinctions,
titles alike unsavoury and unprofitable?

Sir II. Scoundrel! Who taught you this address? 'fore George!
I'll teach you better, in a single lesson!

Mab. (*Aside.*—What can he seek? I saw him yesterday.)

(*To SIR H.*) Be patient, Sir. The man means well, no doubt;
But foolish fancies, called by some religion,
Pervert his sense of duty.

Sir II. Sense! Look, knave!
God and the King have made some gentlemen,
And I am one of them! Off with your hat!

(*Knocks it off.*)

And. (*Deliberately replacing his hat.*)

Truly art thou after the King's own image! Ne'ertheless, with
that idle matter will I not waste precious words. Can you tell me
aught of him I seek?

Sir II. I am Sir Henry Ardenne!

And. Nay, my call is not with the carnal Cavalier, but with his
son—

Sir II. My son, villain?

And. A godly youth, men say—honest and sanctified! yea, one
of the elect—

Edgar. (*To AND.*) Though thou flatterest me—

And. Nay! no offence! for if thou be'st the man, 'twere worth

thy while to listen. I am the bearer of a letter! yea, of two letters, for the good youth, Edgar Ardenne. If worshipful John Milton's letter—

Edgar. Milton! Why said'st not so before? Where is't?

And. (*Presenting a large, sealed packet.*) Here is one, which is not his; and here another (*offering a smaller letter*) which is. (*Aside.*—It maketh my heart glad to see his joy, yea, his exceeding great joy!)

Edgar. I know his beautiful, bold, manly hand;
Though but too seldom have I seen it lately.
Ah, those were golden days we roamed together
Through blooming Italy!

Mab. Break not the seal!
O do not—do not break it! Send it back,
Without a word—unopened!

Edgar. What is this!

Mab. Question me not, but do, as I entreat thee!
There's trouble here: the wax will hold it prisoner,
But, once set free, thou canst not bind it more!
'Twill bend thy youthful form; 'twill mark thy brow
With strange and awful lines; 'twill bid thine eyes
O'erflow with hot and unavailing tears!
The earth will be accursed to thee; the heavens
Without a star! ———

And thou, even thou, with sorrow-shrouded soul,
Shalt seek an early, a dishonored grave!

Edgar. Dishonor! Mabel!

Sir II. Thou! Ardenne! Dishonor!
The world has never joined those words together,
And never shall! My long ancestral line
Is pure as yonder sunbeam from the cloud!

And. (*Aside.*—Yea, from a cloud!)

Edgar. Mabel, what mean you?

Mab. That, I scarcely know;
Yet listen to me: When in Italy,
Your letters ever teemed with Milton's praise;
Sonnets you sent me, he had written there;
Told me of visits to the grand Cathedrals,
With how divine a touch he struck the organ,

And roused its slumberous thunder, till it seemed
 A joy, a wonder, a sublimity!
 And then his daily life grew mystical,
 And in his daily, nay his hourly speech,
 The ancient dream of liberty arose,
 Improved, adorned by his luxuriant fancy;
 And still he gave it words, and richer words,
 And still he worshipped that impossible!

Edgar. All this is true. His skill is masterly.
 I honor and I love him. Now, what more?

Mab. But little. That you love him, well I know,
 And therefore do I fear!

Edgar. Danger in that!
 Danger in loving Milton! Why, the earth
 Hath never felt the tread of nobler man;
 Mild as the morning, patient, wise, and studious;
 In form, Apollo; Hercules in soul!

Mab. Milton came home before you!

Edgar. Well.

Mab. Not so:
 For England was not England when he came!
 There was, and is, a terror through the land—
 A whispered dread of—

Edgar. What?

Mab. I cannot tell:
 The crafty powers of darkness are let loose,
 And lurk around the throne—to topple it!

Edgar. I see not in the dark.

And. (*Aside.*—But *I* do, like a cat.)

Sir II. 'Tis nothing. Rumors
 Have gone about, 'tis true, of some contention
 Between the Royal Charles and Parliament.
 But these are all absurd. A certain Cromwell—

Mab. Cromwell the friend of Milton!—

Sir II. So 'tis said,
 Leads the revolt. It will be hushed to-morrow.

Mab. Heaven grant it may!

Edgar. This Cromwell?

Sir H. But a clown,

A slovenly and overgrown poor farmer,
Who seeks, by some commotion of the people,
To rise upon the top wave, like a porpoise,
And roll awhile i' the sunshine: nothing more.

Mab. But sailors say, the porpoise thus fortells
The coming storm. And so, my dear, good Edgar,
Send back those letters! Trust me, danger's in them!

Edgar. Then I will have it out.

Mab. I pray you!

Edgar. Prayers

Are often heard—in Heaven!

Mab. Would they were

On Earth!

Edgar. (*Breaks the seal, and reads.*) What's here? what's here?
My friend—John Milton—says, “our land lies struggling,”
“Her liberties”—“no hope of their redemption”—
“Unless”—And here again: What have we now?
“With circumstance so honorable, to take
Your place in that high council of the nation”—
My place?—This packet may explain. It does.
“A candidate”—“the House of Parliament.”
“We ask no pledge—we indicate no conduct—
But trust to you our lives!”—'Tis passing strange!

Sir H. 'Tis more than passing impudent! My son!
The roundhead scurvy villains! They! the base
Mechanic burghers! ——

You will refuse them, Edgar! In their teeth—
Is it not so?—hurl back their insolence!

And. (*Aside.*—The old Cavalier rideth an impatient steed, which
runneth away with him; and his son bears him not company!)

Mab. (*Aside.*—I read his face:
The seal of fate is set!)

Sir H. You hesitate—
You will accept this flattering invitation!
Doubtless you will!

And. (*Aside.*—O wonderful old man, to see so well without glasses!)

Edgar. Father, I do accept.

A pause.

Sir H. No, no, you do not, Edgar! Dare not do so!
You! an Ardenne! Of twenty generations
Of lofty, noble, loyal Cavaliers!
You blend yourself with the foul blood of craftsmen,
Pinched, beggarly mechanics! Band yourself
With hypocrites and traitors 'gainst your church,
Your country, and your King!

And. (*Aside.*—Let the good youth judge for himself; and I will even visit the dwelling of this ancient Cavalier, and introduce me to the cook, for verily do I yearn after the flesh pots of Egypt!) *Exit.*

Edgar. If these be traitors, I am surely none.
Should I accept and represent their voices
By a most patriotic vote—what then?

Sir H. Then excellent, i' faith! And so, these knaves,
These puritans, would have you rob the church,
And manacle the King—but you, my boy,
Vote like a loyal Cavalier! Now tell me—
Is not my hair grown whiter?

Edgar. Sir, you jest.

Sir H. It should be whiter: I am more a fool!

Edgar. White hairs have ever been the signs of wisdom.

Sir H. Ashes of heat, and snow of flower and fruit!
Believe it not! It is some old man's lie—
And I am witness to 't! Enough! enough!
And now to breakfast.——

Come, my dear girl! You cannot understand
These grave affairs of State—but all is well!
Let that assure you; or a breakfast may;
Or gallop with the hounds. Hark! tally ho!

Exit.

Mabel. (*Aside.*—All's well! There's nothing more for thee, poor Mabel!

'Tis woman's lot still to be told "all's well!"

And to believe it, or pretend belief,
 Even when, with less of wisdom than a man,
 She moves more surely through a labyrinth.
 "All's well!" thou hear'st it, Mabel!

Edgar. (*Aside.*—Yes, at once
 Will I to Milton. Much there is to say,
 And if to do—the sooner done the better!)
 Mabel, forgive me, if my words were harsh;
 For I am sad at heart!

Mab. I do, dear Edgar!
 But answer not this letter!

Edgar. What, again?
 The offer is a free one!
 And if they please me not, I follow not—
 And thus may serve the King. It is my duty!

Mab. It may be.

Edgar. Is! And you shall own it is!
 But come: for I'll to horse within the hour.

Exit.

Mab. I saved you from the hunt, for you were weary,
 Now you will ride, and are no longer so:—
 'Twas wrong! To chase the stag had little danger,
 To meet the Royal Lion may be—death!

Exit.

SCENE 2. *Night. Library in the cottage of MILTON. A casement open. The music of an organ is heard, from an inner apartment. ELIZABETH discovered, listening. Music ceases. Enter MILTON.*

Eliz. The daintiest music that I ever heard!
 Why is it, father, that 'tis new to me?

Mil. Because it came to-night from yon fair Moon!

Eliz. Only composed to-night!

Mil. A prelude, daughter;

I trust a prelude to a happy strain,
 Which even now is murmuring at my heart.
 As yet, the hour is early: ere I sleep,
 I'll write some rhyming words—two songs, mayhap;
 And "L' Allegro" shall be the name of one;
 And of its shadow—what? "Il Penseroso."

Eliz. Stories of Italy?

Mil. But seeming so :

The scene shall be in England.—

And part of it is round our own dear porch.

Eliz. The vines, the little garden ?

Mil. Yes, of those

A loving word or two : the porch may be

The frame-work of the picture. Something thus :

“Through the sweet-brier, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine”——

Eliz. I know it will be beautiful! Your touch
Can make our simple garden, Paradise!

Mil. (*Aside.*—The garden—Paradise!—

There is a thought in that ; it pleases me :

Paradise Lost—a mournful, wondrous theme !

Yes, I will ponder it.)

Eliz. What think you, father ?

Mil. Only of trifles, in the eyes of men.

The age is stormed with troubles ! presently

Shall peace return ; and then my lofty song,

My universal song, shall win the world,

Who will not let it die !

Eliz. (*Aside.*—His mind is crowded
With its mysterious guests. I ever know
When fancies press upon him. So, good night !

His magic wants no witnesses.) Dear father,

I go to do my copying : the task

Is nearly finished.

Mil. (*Abstractedly.*) Would to Heaven 'twere done !

Eliz. I do my best——

Mil. Right patiently and well.

But not of that I spoke : not words, my daughter.

The swiftly-coming future teems with deeds,

And those, I fear, of blood ! O, Liberty !

Is there no music welcome unto thee

But sighs and groans and shrieks ! No offering

But human hearts, piled, quivering, on thy altar !

Must thou behold the widow's agony ;

The orphan's helplessness; the death of pity;

Ere thou wilt smile to bless us!

Eliz.

Speak not thus!

Surely it is a dream! England is safe!

These sorrows are thin clouds; the light shines through,

And brighter still, to chase them far away!

Mil. It may be, but mine eyes shall never see it!

Eliz. Why not? Have patience yet a little while.

Mil. I shall not see it!

Eliz.

Why, dear father, why?

Mil. Dost thou forget?

Eliz.

Forget?—

Mil.

There comes a darkness

Over my eyes, at times, that, as I write,

Changes the paper to a sombre grey,

In which the words do fade, like stars at morning!

Eliz. My poor, dear father, wilt thou not, for me,

For one who loves thee—yea! with all her soul!

Wilt thou not rest? Wilt not refrain these studies,

That so devour thy sight?

Mil. There's one who urges me to constant toil,

One whom I love even better than my daughter—

England! For her sake, grant me power, O Heaven,

To labor on! Like Sampson, blind yet strong,

Let me defy the enemies of freedom,

Hug the huge pillars of the tyrant's temple,

And crush it to the earth—though I, too, perish!

Not for a day, not for a day, O God!

I work for centuries; and grope in darkness

That light may shine for millions yet to be!

Eliz. The deed is grand. I almost worship that,

But still I love my father, and would save him.

Mil. Be brave, my child; for kind thou ever wert,

Obedient ever. Thy reward is sure.

Remember, then, I, too, obey *my* FATHER!

Now to thy chamber; write no more to-night:

And I will only whisper to the Moon,

An hour at most, then hie me to repose.

Good night!

Eliz. Good night!

Mil. And in thy prayer —

Eliz. As ever!

Exit.

MILTON crosses to the casement, and gazes upward.

Mil. Beautiful light! Beautiful lamp of Heaven!

What marvel that the heathen worshipp'd thee?

That from a thousand hills their altars sent

The silvery smoke of adoration up?

Not knowing HIM, the ONE, the UNCREATE,

What marvel thou shouldst seem a DEITY,

The first-born offspring of His earliest gift,

And blesséd emanation from His glory!—

For I, His favored servant, strive in vain

To wean my heart from thee! Though, soon, no more

Shall I behold thy spirit-soothing smile.

A dread and everlasting midnight comes.

What duty, then, remains? Why, still to labor,

That mental blindness follow not!

Enter ANDREW.

And. There be a man on the porch.

Mil. Robber, or honest man?

And. Verily, he should be honest, for he looketh not like a Cavalier; and his name is Cromwell.

Mil. Why came he not in?

And. In good sooth, and of a verity, because I did not ask him; but rather did desire he should wait without, till it should be plain unto me that you reclined not, even in the arms of Somebody.

Mil. Somnus were more correct.

And. We live and learn; yea, and verily do we learn more evil than good. For the times are full of wickedness, yea, and of abomination; and the bishops persecute the people, and the King, like unto another Cæsar, would grind the Parliament under his iron heel, but for such a friend of liberty, such a noble soldier of the LORD, as brave Master Cromwell——

Mil. Who waits in the chilly night!

And. I will go straightway, and admit that faithful servant——

Mil. As thou art one thyself.

And. Yea, verily!

Exit.

Mil. His words are wrong, but those are from the lips.
His life is right, and that is from the heart.

Enter CROMWELL.

Give you good evening, Cromwell.

Crom. Master Milton,

The LORD be over you!

Mil. I cry you pardon that you stood without.

Crom. Nay, but a moment, with the pleasant moon—
The only pleasant thing in England's night!
Nor, were there blame, were you the least to blame—
And Andrew did his duty civilly.

Ne'erless, there is a fault: and I cry pardon,
Intruding on your studies.

Mil. Of a truth,

Good Cromwell, you are ever welcome here.

Crom. I thought so, and I came:—especially——

Mil. With news?

Crom. From Ireland. Ulster's all ablaze!

The forts are captured! Connaught, Leinster, revel
In massacre! The Counties of the Pale,
Arrayed to quell the insurrection—join it!
Already twenty thousand of our brethren
Are slain!——

Mil. But of the King?

Crom. Ay, of the King! Well said!

Have I not told you horrors?

Mil. Too, too many;

Save that, at last, they may arouse our England!

Crom. They shall! From Parliament I'll thunder them,
Round all the sea-girt coast! But what—what think you?
What name for him who leads this mad rebellion?
'Tis England's King!

Mil. The King? Can this be proved?

Crom. It can: and is!

Mil. Then is there cause to fear! No life is safe!

Woe to the man who dares uplift his voice
 For England's Constitution and her Church !
 But now we see our enemy. Forewarned,
 'Tis our own fault if not foreweaponed, too !

Crom. I watch for that !——

With girded loins, and burning lamps, I watch !
 And to this end now do I come to you.
 What of the youth, Ardenne ?

Mil. Right well of him.

I kept my messenger on guard, who found him,
 To-day, the very hour of his arrival ;
 Gave him the letters——

Crom. Answered he at all ?

Mil. Read the reply. (*Giving CROMWELL a letter.*)

Crom. (*Reading, and speaking aloud at times.*)

We wrestled with the LORD ;
 Yea, with the LORD in prayer. I tell you truth,
 I do profess ; it came unto our minds
 As with an audible and potent voice :
 ' Call to your aid the man—even the youth—
 Edgar Ardenne ! ' He answers : " Here am I ! "

Mil. 'Twas well our offer had no bribery in 't,
 Nor aught of doubt, nor word of one condition !
 This do I know : he is a worshipper
 Of wisdom, truth, and liberty ! To these,
 Let him once see the way, he will not fail,
 Though at the price of all he holds most dear,
 To follow it !

Crom. Why came he not to-day ?

Mil. I know not. Still,

There is good reason. He will surely come.

Crom. I do begin to doubt him. Let him not,
 In promises, take Charles for an example—
 His Majesty, the Liar !

Mil. Be assured.

Enter EDGAR.

Edgar. Milton !

Mil. Ardenne! Most welcome home! My friend,
Oliver Cromwell.

Edgar. (*Aside.*—Mabel's prophecy!)

(*To CROMWELL.*) Sir, I rejoice to meet you. I have heard,
Even in a single day, my first in England,
The story of your life.

Crom. A simple story,
Nor worth the telling. ~ In the hands of Him,
Whom I would serve, I am a blade of grass,
But if it be His will to give me strength,
Yea, as the warrior's spear I may be strong,
To do His holy bidding.

Mil. (*To EDGAR.*) Troublous times
Have darkened England, since I saw you last.
That moonlight night, more beautiful than ours,
Musing within the haunted Coliseum,
Our pensiveness was for the glorious past,
The old renown of Rome—not England's fall!

Crom. The fall of England!——
Truly it will be so, unless her children
Rise to the rescue! England's fall—the World's!
Religion, Freedom, have no home but here:
If here they dwell not, they return to Heaven!

Edgar. The news to-day—it went in whispers by me—
Can it be true—the King?

Mil. It is too true!

Crom. A damnéd crime! Too black to think upon!
A thousand hearts this day will blaze in England,
At telling of the wrong! A thousand arms
Be ready to avenge it! Insult, first,
Then persecution, tyranny, and murder!
We have no laws, but by his high permission;
We have no liberty, save he may grant it;
We have no faith, but his, the LORD'S Anointed!
We have—no English blood!

Edgar. (*Aside.*— O, woe to me,
That such things are: and Mabel, woe to thee:
Thou, in thy love, to deem thy love a traitor,

To scorn his love, because he loves his honor!
 And thou, old man, my poor heart-broken father,
 Deceived in all thy hopes, down to the grave
 Tottering with rapid steps, and leaving me
 Thy heritage, a curse!)

Mil. Ardenne!

Edgar. I listen.

Mil. Too much unto thyself: To England more!
 Cromwell!

Crom. Pardon me:

My thoughts were down at Huntingdon.

Mil. Recall them.

Crom. I try: they circle England! Nowhere rest!

Mil. Band them with all the best of English thoughts,
 And so consult—decide! To Liberty
 Be thou our Leader!

Crom. I, an humble man,
 The weakest of the servants of the LORD!

Edgar. Let me be first to say: I follow Cromwell!

Enter the SPIRIT.

Crom. Beautiful! Terrible! Thou comest again!
 Why dost thou visit me?

Mil. (To EDGAR.) It is a mood
 That doth at times oppress him. In his youth
 Such seasons were.—

Edgar. Look now! As one that suffers agony,
 He battles with the unresisting air,
 Gazes on vacancy, and speaks to nothing!

Mil. Disturb him not.

Crom. O, answer, answer me!
 It will not! See! it moves! see! see! 'tis still!
 (*Grasping MILTON.*) I told you this had been, and you believed not!
 Look for yourself! 'Tis there! But no, no, no;
 It is not for the touch! Could I but grasp it—
 I would compel reply: now I entreat!

Spirit. Cromwell!

Crom. A voice! Or do I dream—

Spirit.

Hail, Cromwell!

A deed invites thee, and thou shalt not fail!

Cromwell, *the First in England*——*Crom. (Eagerly.)* Speak!*Spirit.*

All hail!

*Exit SPIRIT.**Characters stand grouped; as the curtain falls, mysterious and distant triumphant music.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Apartment in Woodleigh Manor. SIR HENRY and EDGAR seated at a table, with wine.**Sir H.* Come, Edgar, come! This gloom will never do!

But I can see how sits the wind, my boy!

I am not yet so old but I remember

When I was young; yes, and a gallant youth

As any in the court of good Queen Bess.

Edgar. I do not doubt it, Sir.*Sir H.* A wreck—a wreck!

But there were ladies—of the fairest, too—

Who kept their smiles for me, in those old times;

And, mark it, Edgar, one above them all,

Whose favor was, indeed, a thing to boast of:—

Whom, think you, 'twas?

Edgar. Some years before my birth!*Sir H.* Egad, you're right! I'll tell you: 'twas the Queen!*Edgar.* Elizabeth!*Sir H. (Rising.)* Heaven bless her Majesty!

Come, fill your glass. 'Tis but a simple story,

Merely an acorn, if I so may say,

And still, it grew an oak! You do not drink.

Edgar. Is't a dry story, Sir?*Sir H.* Your wit is good,

That is, 'tis good enough for Parliament,
But not true coin, to pay your friends withal.
Listen to me.

Edgar. Of Queen Elizabeth.

Sir H. I went with her, one morning, to the "Globe"—
The theatre so named—to see a play
Then first to be enacted.

Edgar. Ha! the "Globe!"

'Twas Shakspeare's theatre!

Sir H. And Shakspeare's self

An actor in't. It was a tragedy,
Entitled "Hamlet." Shakspeare played the Ghost.

Edgar. "Alas, poor Ghost!"

Sir H. Ay, so the Courtiers said,

But I thought otherwise. "What says Ardenne?"
Were the Queen's words to me. "Your Majesty,
I follow not their minds." "How so?" the Queen.
"With proper deference," was my reply,
"Herein the actor so presents the author,
I do forget them both, and see the Ghost!"
"I grant you!" said the Queen; and then she smiled;
And from that smile, like Summer's, came the fruits,
The golden fruits, that now do cheer my Winter!

Edgar. A royal favor, royally bestowed!

Sir H. Howe'er that be, like an old man I wander.

Here, fill your glass again. I said before,
The reason of your gloom is evident—
Supposing love be reason! Yes, I mind
How I was wont to droop at leaving Alice—
No more of that! 'Tis gone. Now to the point:
You love, and Mabel will not say you nay.
My benison on both!

Edgar. (*Aside.*—O, not for me

Can be the boon you offer! Not for me!)

Sir H. Tush! tush, boy! None of this! Now Mabel's yours,
Wed when you will: the sooner, why, the better.
You start to-night for Parliament?

Edgar. I do—

Sir H. To toss these rebel roundheads high as heaven!
'Fore George, 'twill be a scene! I see them stride
More boldly to their purpose now, with you,
With some respectability, their friend:
Presto! the ground is mined! A shock—a cry!
The smoke clears off—ha! ha! a grand effect!

Edgar. I go to do my duty—

Sir H. 'Tis enough!

Edgar. But listen to me, sir!

Sir H. I' faith, I *will* not!

Mabel, perchance, will prove a better listener!
And, that you may have opportunity,
I think, ere Christmas, she will visit London.

Edgar. Mabel in London!

Sir H. What's the wonder there?

Edgar. The pleasure, sir.

Sir H. Both, Edgar, both, my son.

For London nothing sees so fair as she,
And nothing half so pleasant! Yes, of late,
I've often thought to leave our lonely woods,
So many gentles of the land are going,
Lured by long sittings of the Parliament.
How if, at once, I give you a commission?

Edgar. I shall be glad to execute it, Sir!

Sir H. A trifle more reserve! You speak too freely.

"Provided"—so, and so,—were Parliamentary!

Edgar. I thought 'twas Parliamentary to *promise!*

Sir H. Why, so it is—and then again, 'tis not!

Choose the right time for each; but promise now
To find a fitting mansion in the city,
See it well furnished—write me when 'tis done—
And meet your sweetheart and Sir Henry there,
Who will not keep you waiting.

Edgar. Sir, I promise.

Sir H. Answered with gravity, but rather more
Than the occasion needs. Are you not glad?

The young men of to-day are quite too serious ;
 It was not thus some sixty years ago :
 I would have danced, once, to have heard such news !

Edgar. Not on the day of an election, Sir,
 With such a load of honor on your back !

Sir H. 'Fore George, your pardon ! I forgot your honor !

Edgar. (*Aside.*—That must not I forget !—
 What is inevitable, tortures more
 With more delay ! I am resolved :) Dear father,—

Sir H. “ Dear Mabel ! ” is the word ! For, look you, Sir !
 Dear Mabel comes !

Edgar. O, how can I repay—

(*Embracing SIR HENRY.*)

Sir H. By loving her,
 Who is more fitting object for these raptures
 Than an old weather-beaten trunk like me !

Exit.

Edgar. Once wedded—and no difference of opinion
 May part us more !—and yet 'tis sordid—base !
 Mabel shall not despise me !

Enter MABEL.

Mab. Heard I not
 Sir Henry's voice ?

Edgar. 'Tis but a moment since
 He left me.

Mab. I will seek him.

Edgar. Presently.
 Mabel, your hand ! Even as it lies in mine,
 But not so tremblingly, I'd have it rest
 Through all life's journey ! Shall it not be so ?—
 I am oppressed ! I cannot breathe ! I see
 Horrors unheard of ! Blood is on our doors !—

Mab. What is the matter, Edgar ? Come, be seated :
 You are not well !

Edgar. I am—or shall be, soon :
 'Tis but a passing faintness—only—

Mab. Cromwell !

(EDGAR starts.)

Is there such terror in his very name,
To pale a soldier's cheek?

Edgar. Such glory, Mabel,
To bid it glow like that of fiery Mars!

Mab. Then you have met him?

Edgar. Yes!

Mab. And joined your hands—

Edgar. And mingled hearts—and promised—

Mab. Promised? What?

Edgar. Honor and liberty!

Mab. The death of Kings!

(A pause.)

Edgar. It may be that I am a timorous dreamer:
These terrors, painted on the darkening air,
A breath may move them, and disperse to nought.
If they be true—I will not shrink away!
It must be, Mabel!—

Ere the fierce storm of war may burst upon us,
Be mine, for weal and woe—for Earth and Heaven!

Mab. (*Aside.*—It is, then, as I dreaded!) All my hopes—
You cannot doubt it, Edgar—all—have been—
To know myself your wife—

Edgar. O, thanks, dear love!

Mab. But now—but now—'tis anguish, and despair!

Edgar. Mabel!

Mab. Let me say on! I love you not the less—
Farewell!

Edgar. Recall that word! Remember, Mabel,
Two hearts are in my voice!—My own—my father's!

Mab. Ah, this will wound him grievously! I stay!
The old man's friendless sorrow I will share,
Lest it grow deadlier! My place is chosen!
I may not join you in the awful battle,
But *here* will be your shield!

Edgar. You torture me!

Mab. I would protect you!

Edgar. Come, then, to my heart!
Where should my shield be, but upon my heart!
Come, and I am invincible!

Mab. No! no!
I am a poor, weak girl, whose nature is,
Whose duty and whose glory is—obedience!
I argue not, to move your fixed judgment!
Respect my own! The sapling to the blast
Bends down, indeed, but when 'tis overblown
Rises again, and stands no less erect
Than the proud oak, that yielded not an inch!

Edgar. I never loved until this hour of sadness!
And if my love meet not return of love,
My heart, that is so strangely throbbing now,
Must soon be still forever!

Mab. Said I not
I loved you, Edgar?

(*A pause.*)

Edgar. Is there, then, no hope?
Must I go forth to walk the world in darkness?
Am I so poor, a peasant's pride may mock me?—
Rich in a smile—a word!

Mab. There is one hope!

Edgar. O, haste to tell me!

Mab. If this wild storm pass by——
If the green homes of England grow not red
With England's wasted life——

(*A pause.*)

Edgar. Mabel, one kiss—
One kiss, my own, lost Mabel!

(*She falls upon his breast, and flings her arms round his neck.*)

Enter SIR HENRY.

Sir H. (*Aside.*—Ha! ha! 'Fore George! but that is well, indeed!
I would I had their picture painted so!
Yes, and they keep the attitude, good sooth,
Quite long enough to please the dullest artist!)
Children, may Heaven bless you!—

Tears? tears? And on a soldier's cheek! 'Fore George,
 Your happiness has made a fool of you!
 Let not those iron men, the Puritans,
 Hear aught of this! 'T would ruin your first speech!
 (*Aside.*—Poor boy, I pity him!) I give you joy,
 But also come to take 't away again:
 Your horse is ready.

Mab. (*To EDGAR.*) Must you go so soon?

Sir H. So soon? You little witch! you've kept him waiting
 An hour beyond his time! Now "short and sweet"
 Was lovers' motto in my roving days!
 So, Sir, farewell!—

Mabel, we spend the holidays in London,
 Where, for a week, you may rehearse this scene,
 Till, enter Friar! And Romeo and Juliet
 Doze by the chimney-side as man and wife!
 Now, dry your tears, take kisses, and adieus;
 Be quick! I've letters, and I long for news!

(*EDGAR and MABEL embrace tenderly. Then exeunt SIR HENRY and MABEL, R., and EDGAR, L.*)

SCENE 2. *Grand Saloon in the Palace of Whitehall. Lord DIGBY, Queen HENRIETTA, and LADIES. Some at side tables engaged with chess. Music. JULIE dancing. This being finished, she courtsies before the Queen, and waits her commands.*

Dig. Well done, i'faith! She looks and moves like Venus——
 If Venus danced? How was't, your Majesty?
 When, rising radiant from the embracing sea,
 Her delicate feet first touched the blooming shore—
 So young—so fresh—so beautiful—so happy—
 She must have danced! How was't, your Majesty?

Queen. What is't to you, if Venus danced or no?

Dig. Why—nothing.

Queen. There's the end on't!

Dig. End of nothing?

May Heaven forbid! 'Tis nothing shapes our speech,
 Makes the day busy, circles sleep at night,
 Yea, the round world is nought—and nought is nothing!

Queen. You have made something of it, good my lord.

Dig. (*Whispers.*—Even as your Majesty, by love, made me!)

Queen. Presume not on my love!

Dig. Who would presume

On happiness? The thoughts of happiness

Are gentle, and admit no haughty guest!

Queen. If, then, you hold my love in such regard,
Why look beyond it?

Dig. I? beyond it?

Queen. You!

My latest importation, here, from France,

Julie, the dancing-girl, is much admired!

A Venus, truly!

Dig. Did I say, a Venus?

Queen. Dare you to mock me thus! Come hither, girl!

Our fair Lord Digby was a traveler once,

And ventured from our Kingdom even to France,

And is a solemn judge of courtly dancing,

And says—Speak *you*, my lord—or make me false!

Dig. (*Aside.*—The devil did it!—

Nothing remains but trip the dancer's toes,

And pet the Lioness some other time!)

I then was thinking, not so much of her,

As of a dancer whom I saw in France—

Queen.—(*Aside.* Yes, of a dancer whom he saw in France!)

Dig. Recalled to memory by—I scarcely know—

Some chance resemblance—by a look, or step—

So faint, that, seeing both, 'twould seem absurd—

Like a poor candle to a conflagration!

Queen. Then I mistook, and you made light of her!

Dig. Most excellent, i'faith! I cry you mercy!

Queen. Still—

She whom your noble judgment disapproves

Must be unworthy favor. (*To JULIE.*—You may go!)

Dig. Pardon, my Queen!—

Queen. I will not hear a word!

(*Crosses to LADIES at table.*)

Dig. (*Aside.*—Was ever woman of such jealous mood!

Was ever dancing-girl so beautiful!

I will not lose my Most Magnificent!

No, nor the tripping Venus! Julie! Julie!

(Overtakes JULIE, and whispers a few words. Exit JULIE.)

Enter PAGE, throwing open the centre doors.

Page. The King!

Enter KING CHARLES, pacing the room.

King. Undutiful, disloyal varlets!

Queen. What is the matter, Charles?

King. Rebellious knaves!

To deal thus with their Sovereign!

Queen. Who, my lord?

King. To me! to me a message! This I tell you:

Have *they* their will, I may be *called* a King,

Be served upon the knee—with bending head—

But shall be less a master—even my own—

Than the most lowly gentleman in England!

So shall it never be!

Queen. Why, what is all this raving? Who has vexed you?

I cannot understand!

King. Indeed! Why should you?

Queen. I am the wife of Charles, and England's Queen.

Your heart and hand have given me empire, both;

Your voice will not refuse the confirmation?

King. Pardon my anger—there is cause for it—

But trust my love—there's also cause for that!

(Caressing her.)

Dig. *(Aside.—Now could I preach a sermon, all on Faith!*

How beautiful is Faith! How kind is Faith!

Believing most the most impossible!)

King. *(To QUEEN.)* I'll tell you, then. I sent to Parliament,

Demanding of its members two or three,

On charge of treason;

And have received, not prompt obedience back,

But—mark the word!—a message!

Queen. Is it so!

And is it possible that you, the heir

Of mighty Sovereigns—mightier King than they—

Will thus be braved, defied, and trampled on,

By such a scum of low and scurvy fellows,
This Parliament! —

That you will see the jewels of your Crown
Plucked in a heap, to deck the fronts of fools—
Your sceptre wrested from your baby hand,
Without a struggle! Wretched that I am!
Or ere this day, would I had stayed in France;
My own, chivalric, beautiful, proud France,
Or that I had been wedded to a MAN!

King. Madam, go to!

Dare not impugn our energy and courage!
England and you shall know, full speedily,
Charles Stuart brooks not insolence at home,
Nor usurpation of his rights abroad!

Dig. Well said, my Sovereign!

Queen. [To KING.] In this most noble wrath, I recognize
The crownéd soul! Now do I know, indeed,
Forth by the beard these villains shall be drawn!
Do it; or look not on my face again!

King. Brave girl! brave girl! And beautiful as brave!

[With an arm round her waist, leads her to a sofa, and sits beside her,
fondly.]

The centre doors are again thrown open.

Page. Sir Henry Ardenne!

King. (Starting up.) Ardenne!

Queen. Your ancient friend.

King. My new-discovered foe!

Dig. Sir Henry, may it please your Majesty,
Hath, from old time, a loyal servant been,
And doubtless comes to offer——

King. Silence, fool!

Queen. [To KING.] My lord, you were not wont to be so rude!

King. Nor fools so daring!

Dig. [Aside.—“Who has a wife, and cannot keep a wife,
Is the King-fool, I wot, of mortal life!”]

King. Sir Heary hath a son—in Parliament!

Queen. Then you another friend, where friends are wanted.

Enter SIR HENRY and MABEL.

Sir H. I greet your Majesties, with loyal heart !
 True, I am old, but I have served Queen Bess,
 And own a son, whose heart, as good as mine,
 And stronger arm, are yours, I warrant me !

King. You have a son !

Sir H. Yes, and a daughter, too !

(*Introducing MABEL.*)

King. You have a son !

Sir H. Lately returned from Italy. John Milton
 Was his companion there—a learnéd man,
 Discreet and worthy.

King. Excellent discretion !
 To plot with fanatics against my throne !—
 And worthy, too !

A poet ! Culler of fantastic rhymes,
 To cheat the silly hearts of sylvan swains,
 With “loves” and “doves !” His immortality
 May chance be born before his natural death !
 So much for his companion when abroad :
 What friend hath he in England ?

Sir H. Sooth, I know not.

King. I say 'tis false ! He scarcely landed here
 When he was sworn in friendship—Sir, what think you ?
 With my sworn enemy—with Cromwell !

Sir H. No !

Mab. (*Aside.*—Edgar is lost !)

Sir H. I understand it all !
 Ah ! 'tis a cunning play ! There's sport afoot !
 I could not hide me, like a dull-eyed owl,
 But followed Edgar, at his very heels,
 To share the grand surprise !

King. (*Aside.*—And so you shall !)
 I will, myself, to-day, to Parliament,
 And learn the virtue of a Monarch's presence !
 What ! shall the traitors disobey me now !

(*MABEL seems faint.*)

Sir H. Are you not well, my daughter ?

Mab. Yes—O, yes —

'Tis nothing! (*Recovering.*)

Queen. Let her come and sit by me.

Mab. I thank your Majesty. The air——

(*Retiring to a window. Lord DIGBY hastens to open it, and remains in conversation with MABEL, unwilling on her part.*)

Sir H. (To KING.) Edgar is loyal—every atom loyal—
And feigns your foe to better prove your friend.

Wait but a little while: these Puritans,
By Edgar's art, will cower and slink away,
And never more be seen! My knightly honor
That what I speak is true.

King. It may be so:
Heaven grant it! Yet, this very day, his deeds
Were full of traitorous daring!

Sir H. Seemingly:
Wait for the issue!

King. (Aside.—I will hurry it!)

Mab. (Aside.—I doubt the King; and doubt shall make me sure!)
What will not love, yea, even hopeless love,
To shield its love! I may, will save him yet!
For whom? It was not love that said,—“for whom?”

Sir H. (To the KING.) I will not more detain your Majesty;
For I have seen, for long, the cares of State,
And know how dearer than to labor's brow
Rest is to that that wears the heavy Crown!
Therefore, to both, farewell! farewell to all!

(*Exeunt SIR HENRY and MABEL.*)

King. Dotage and young simplicity!

(*Shouts heard.*)

What noise?

*Dig. (At window.)—*Friends of your Majesty are passing by,
Toward Saint Stephen's—some on horse—on foot:
The people shout their approbation.

(*Other shouts.*)

King. Now?

Dig. I grieve to say, the mob is cheering Cromwell.
Lenthall is with him—Hollis—Pym—Ardenne—

And others of the Commons.

King. Traitors, all!

These fools would shout them at the block—and shall!

Dig. They go, attended, to the Parliament,
Each or with two or three well-armed retainers.

King. What! They will give us battle? I will go
Attended, too! Quick! Summon forth my guard!

(*Exit DIGBY.*)

(*KING walks the apartment, impatiently.*)

Queen. I prithee, do not go!

King. "I prithee, do not!"

Woman! You taunted me with cowardice!

Me! By Saint Paul! but I will show the world

Charles Stuart wears a Crown, and bears a heart

That shall defend it gloriously! Away!

The iron's hot: I'll strike without delay!

(*Exit, followed by the others.*)

SCENE 3. *Before the Parliament House.*

Enter CROMWELL and EDGAR.

Crom. And you against us, in our strait and peril!

Edgar. I know not, Master Cromwell, what you mean.

Crom. You know not what I mean? Is it no strait,

No peril, that the King should hither come,

With his accurséd Cavaliers—their swords

New-whetted, and their hellish hearts afire,

To shed the blood o' the Saints? Should dare come hither,

Hither, within these ancient-honored walls!

Edgar. Will he do this?

Crom. What will he *not*, if we,

The watchers on the house-top, yea! the tower,

Give not to men the note of coming woe,

Sound not the trumpet over all the land!

Yea! will he come, and that right speedily!

Yea! will he come, and if our hearts be weak,

And if our arms unstrung, yea! will he come,

And trample down the liberties of England!

Edgar. Never!—

Never, while I, if none beside, have sword,
And hand to wield it!

Crom. Is it so? Would you
Draw forth the carnal sword?

Edgar. To shield these walls,
These holy walls of England's free debate,
From lawless and despotic violence!
It is our right, our duty, to consult,
Untrammelled, in the office of our trust,
And we should die for 't!

Crom. We will live for that,
Yea! even if we die—eternally!
Hold fast thy good resolve! I'll wake the rest
To a like sense. When we assemble next,
Be in thy place; then call me fool and liar,
An' great things be not born of what I do!

Exit into the House.

(*EDGAR stands in deep thought.*)

Enter MABEL.

Mab. (*Aside.*—Cromwell! The serpent of my Paradise!
And he deceived already!) Edgar! Edgar!

Edgar. Thou? and alone? The times are perilous——

Mab. Therefore am I abroad—therefore alone.
The King is coming to the Parliament
With armed men!—

Quick with my warning to the rest! Farewell!

Exit.

Edgar. Heroic heart!—But thou, thou misnamed King!
Thou wolf! thou Heaven-accursed destroying devil!
We know thee now: Ye winds, ye tireless winds,
I toss to ye my loyalty! Go bear it,
One to the other, round the stormy world,
Hurl it about, and rend, and scatter it,
Even its dust, till none may find it more!

Exit into House.

SCENE 4. *The Parliament Chamber.* CROMWELL, EDGAR, LENTHALL,
(*Speaker,*) HOLLIS, PYM, and other MEMBERS, in their places.

Crom. As it was given unto me in my mind,
Now, by a private message, 'tis confirmed;

This day, Charles Stuart, with his soldier-slaves,
Will enter Parliament—I say he will—
To seize by force the “traitors” in our midst!
Speak! Shall he have them?

Several Members. Never! never!

Crom. Yea! We are English still! We still are free!

Lent. If they be absent, when he come—these “traitors”—
The fearful consequence may be averted,
Which must arise, else: all of us are armed,
And doubtless all resolved on liberty.

Crom. Let them withdraw, then, straightway, to the city,
Until this tyranny be overpast.

[*Aside.*—The hour will strike anon!]

Sev. Mem. Withdraw! withdraw!

After solicitation, exeunt EDGAR, HOLLIS, and PYM. The tramp of soldiers and clink of steel heard without, then the word “Halt!” The door is thrown open, discovering the KING, with drawn sword, at the head of his GUARD. Some MEMBERS start to their feet, partly drawing their rapiers, but, at a sign from the SPEAKER, resume their places, still with looks of indignation.)

King. (To GUARD.) Enter not, any of ye, on your lives!

(*He strides along the hall, deliberately gazing on the face of each MEMBER, who returns the gaze. Arrived at CROMWELL, CROMWELL rises, and looks steadily at the KING, who first seeks to avoid him, then meets him with anger and pride, CROMWELL with sarcastic, bitter and determined triumph—all the rest intently observing these. Presently the KING’S aspect quails. He passes on, with downcast eyes, to the chair. CROMWELL looks loftily around the hall, and resumes his seat. The SPEAKER advances to meet the KING, who ascends the platform, and stands awhile surveying the House.*)

King. Gentlemen of the Commons, I am sorry
For this my cause of coming now to you.
On yesterday I sent a sergeant hither,
Demanding some, by me, accused of treason:
And not obedience—I received a message!
Never did King of England more revere
Your privilege than I do—yes, and shall—

Yet treason hath no privilege! I must,
 And will—where'er the traitors lurk—demand them!
 Ho! I say, Master Hollis! Master Pym!
 Ardenne!

(A confused and angry murmur among the GUARD, with brandishing of weapons.)

No answer! Then, Sir, *(To SPEAKER)* answer you!
 Be any of these men here present?

(LENTHALL pauses; then bowing courteously—)

Lent.

Sir,

I have no eyes to see, nor tongue to speak,
 Save as this House, whose servant I am sworn,
 Shall order me.

King. (Passionately.) Ha! Sir! *(Checking himself.)* I do believe
 My eyes are to the full as good as yours,
 And I do see my birds are flown. But this—
 I tell ye this, and look ye to it well!—
 I hold this House to send them all to me!
 Failing of which, I shall myself go seek them!
 Their treason is most foul, and you shall thank me,
 Yes, all of you, that I discover it!
 On a King's word, moreover, I assure you,
 Never did I mean aught of violence.
 Fair trial shall they have; I meant not other!

Crom. (Aside, to those near him.)

Look to the door! "Fair trial," say you so!
 A ruffian jury! Partisans and pistols!

(The KING descends, quickening his pace, his looks sadly bent upon the floor. Member after Member starts up, as he passes, with angry brow and clinched hand. Before CROMWELL, the KING raises his visage. CROMWELL starts to his feet.)

Crom. Privilege!

Sev. Mem. Privilege! Privilege!

(Guard eagerly press forward, ready for action. One of them exclaims: "He dares not!" In the general confusion, the KING gains the door.)

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Apartment at Woodleigh Manor.* SIR HENRY standing at a table, on which are writing materials and scrolls of parchment, one with several broad seals. MABEL kneeling at his feet. SEXBY at a little distance, mending his pen. JOSEPH standing by the door.

Mab. No! no! I will not rise!——

O, you were wont to be both just and generous,
Calm in your youth, as I have heard them tell,
And temperate! Be, then, yourself, my father,
Be, then, yourself, nor sully by this deed
A whole long life of wisdom and of honor!

Sir H. (*Raising her.*) It may not be! Our race hath now run out!
The lands that have been subject to my name
For centuries, shall never know it more!

Mab. Say not so, father!

Sir H. Would—O, would to Heaven,
His corpse had mouldered on some foreign field,
His bones been buried in the secret sea—
That he had died by any death—had lived
Whatever life of want, pain, wretchedness!
Better—far better, so to mourn for him,
Than to have seen him *thus*—a damnéd blot!——
A traitor to his King—his Country's foe—
A curse to him from whom he drew his being!
No! plead to me no more;
Never a traitor—hypocrite and traitor—
Shall aught of me inherit!

Sex. (*Advancing.*)—Yea, Sir Henry,
You have the right—himself has given it you—
By his own act of treason.

Sir H. Silence, knave!

Sex. (*Aside.*—“Knave!” He called me “Knave!”
And yet it cannot be; being a term
Of common application.—
If actionable, it had so been proved
By learnéd men, ere now. No precedent:

And so, it is not so!)

Sir H. I have the right

To sunder this entail—it shall be sundered
Or ere the sunset! He hath in my heart
No corner—not a jot of mine affections!

(JOSEPH advances, imploringly.)

Himself hath cut his path, and, though he rue it,
By that path must he travel to the end—
Dishonored—outcast—disinherited—
Accur—

Mab. No! curse him not! or never taste
Of peace again! Father, curse not your son—
Your first-born and your only!—
Sinner, curse not your fellow! Christian, curse not
A soul whose hopes are even as your own!
Curse not, but pray! Not for your erring child,
Though much he errs, but for your sinful self!
“Vengeance is mine!” O, pray for penitence!

Sir H. (*Affected.*)—So far, at least, you have the better side;
'Tis neither Christian-like to curse, nor manly.
But to this gear, good Master Sexby.

Sex. Yes, Sir,
I'm ready, as I always am, Sir Henry,
To do your honor's bidding.

Sir H. Well. This deed,
You tell me, is complete and firm in all.

Sex. A lion could not break it, nor a mouse
Find the least hole to creep through. Sir, my deeds,
Like Buff the Boxer, everybody knows!
And as for this, to wit, the present one,
Most ignorant am I of my profession,
An' it be not as strong as law can make it!
Master Ardenne, being last of the entail,
And, by His Majesty, at Oxford now,
Proclaimed a traitor, scarcely could inherit,
Even without this deed of settlement
On Mistress Mabel and her heirs—

Mab.

On me!

Never will I receive the smallest share—
 Though I should perish of starvation—never!
 And heirs—what tell you *me* of heirs? Would I,
 I, *his* affianced bride!—
 Deign to bestow myself on his inferior—
 And who, that's human, *is* not his inferior?
 No, no! Your testament is nothing worth:
 I will die heirless, or the wife of Edgar!
 Then what avail your subtleties of law?
 I spurn their false and fickle toils before me,
 As the free hawk would rive with scornful wing
 The trammels of the spider's air-spun web!

Sir H. Peace! for your fame's sake, peace! degenerate girl!
 Would you disclose to these your woeful weakness—

Mab. To these? To every dweller of the earth,
 Would I avow the strength, the constancy,
 The immortality of this my love!
 Weakness?—

I tell you that I am no whit less strong—
 Nay, ten times stronger than yourself—in faith,
 In loyalty, in conscience, in resolve!
 I do adore him, even the more for this,
 His constancy to what he deems the right,
 When, all the while, each fibre of his heart
 Is tugging him toward the other cause—
 When loss of name, fame, fortune, happiness,
 Must follow his devotion!—
 Yet never will I wed him while he wields
 A rebel blade, or prompts a rebel council—
 Never, unless —

(A pause.)

Your madness drive me to it!
 My conscience doth recoil. Now let your lands
 Descend to him who justly should inherit,
 And sooner will I die than marry him!
 But let *me* have them—

And instantly will I make restitution
To the true owner, by what means I may—
The sacrifice of conscience—yea, myself!

Sir H. Nay, but you *will* not! Better, better, Mabel,
I read your heart than you, yourself, can read it!

Mab. And wherefore not? Have I not now, for conscience,
Cast to the earth the highest heart that ever
Did beat for woman? Have I not abandoned,
For loyalty—a sense, perchance, mistaken—
My every hope of happiness on earth?

(*Enter EDGAR, remaining at the door.*)

But since you are not won by any pleading,
Then hear me swear, and also hear me THOU——

Edgar. (*Advancing.*) Swear not, Mabel, if you love me!
Swear not in my behalf—nor thwart my father.
In good time have I come. This purpose reached me,
Ere you beheld my presence——

Sir H. Wherefore, traitor,
Traitor and villain! have you thus presumed
To desecrate these honorable halls?
Have you come sword in hand—good sooth, and leading
Your canting hypocrites, who march to psalm-tunes?
What seek you here? To spoil, and slay, and steal?
Or have you come, forsooth, with oily words
And a God-fearing countenance, to preach
To the benighted poor old man his error,
That he, too, may unsheath the sword of Gideon,
And go down with the chosen of the LORD
To strive against the Philistines in Gial!
Such is the style of your new comrades—you
Can mouth it with the best, I warrant me!
Can you not preach and pray? and quote the Scriptures
To justify—the doings of the devil?

Edgar. For none of these things have I come, my father,
Not yet for aught that may offend or grieve you.

(*SIR HENRY makes a gesture of angry impatience.*)

Hear me a little while, and I will cease

To pain you with my presence.

Sir II. Be it, then,
A little while, if be it must at all—
And I suppose it *must*, for doubtless you
Have brought five hundred of your fighting Saints
To back you, else you had not ventured hither !
Be brief, for even now I look to see
The roof-tree of my father's house fall in,
To crush the wretch that brought, on all it shelters,
Eternal infamy !

Edgar. No soldier, follower,
No, nor a groom—I pray you credit me—
Is with me, nor within ten miles of Woodleigh.
Alone I come, once more to say adieu,
And crave—what I have nothing done to forfeit—
A father's blessing !

Sir II. (*Motioning him to the casement.*) Look you, Sir ! Behold
Yonder fair company of horsemen. What—
Can you remember it?—what banner strikes
The air above them ?

Edgar. That, Sir, of our house.

Sir II. Yes, it is old, and battle-worn, and torn
With many wounds. It scarce were miracle
If every wound did gush with blood to-day ;
The murderer of the honor of our house
Daring to stand before it ! On, Sir, on !
The time is pressing, and my charger stamps,
Impatient—and I do not ride with *you* !
(*To JOSEPH.*) Get hence, and fetch us lights ; it hath grown dark
Betimes. Yes, dark betimes ! [*Exit JOSEPH.*]

Edgar. I did hope, Sir,
That your resentment had so far abated
You might endure my visit.——
To offer you the reasons for my conduct
Were, in your present mood, of no avail.
Suffice it, therefore, to inform you this :
Much may I lose, and nothing can I gain ;

That neither power, nor place, nor bribe of love,
 Nor proffered rank, nor yet the baser meed
 Of gold, hath tempted me; that neither gift
 Nor guerdon will reward my services,
 Nought save the quiet of an innocent heart,
 And His most high approval, who, alone,
 Creating, can interpret it! Enough.

(*Re-enter JOSEPH, with lights.*)

This deed, which now but waits your signature,
 Deprives me of my heritage. (*To SEXBY.*—My father,
 Being the last in the entail, save myself,
 And I proclaimed a traitor, hath, you deem it,
 The power to alienate this property?)

Sex. If that the law mean what I think it means;
 And 'tis a wondrous attribute of law
 Sometimes to mean what few would think it means—

Edgar. Hold! interrupt me not:—then say he *hath*—
 Provided that the party to the which
 I am indebted for my “traitor” title
 Shall, in the end, come off victorious!
 If not, your deed is nothing.

Sir H. So, a trick!

'Tis a far hope to look to!

Edgar. Sir, think not
 I would inherit thus! Annul this deed,
 And I will join with you to break the entail
 Forever! Then, if King or Commons win,
 You shall, alone, be master of your wealth.
 Freely, if all were mine, I'd barter all,
 For one short word—the blessing of my father!

Sir H. I take you at your proffer. Sign and seal
 This blank; 'tis likely we shall meet no more;
 And here I pledge to you my knightly honor
 It shall be so applied as you have said.

(*EDGAR signs. SIR HENRY passes the parchments to SEXBY.*)
 Prepare this parchment.

Sex. Sir, with all good haste!

(Then, regarding the unsigned instrument,)

O, what a noble deed was here undone!

(Exit.)

Edgar. (Aside.—'Tis over. Now, forever, home, farewell!

These venerable halls, time-haunted, glorious,
Where the high virtues of my ancestry
Made the earth proud that bore them—O, farewell!

And ye, green parks, and many-rustling woods,
Dear to my childhood, dear to love's bright hours,

Farewell! My heart was rooted here: 'tis torn

Fiercely away, and cast upon the flood,

Never to rest, never to anchor more!

Father, your blessing! (Kneels.)

Sir H. Blessing to a rebel,

A hypocrite, a traitor!—

Not though my life should pay for my refusal!

Be grateful that I curse you not! be grateful,

Not unto me, but yon pale, suffering girl,

Whom your false villainy hath blighted! She

Alone withholds it!—Hence! Why tarry you?

Begone, an outcast from my home forever!

(MABEL sinks on the floor.)

Edgar. (To MABEL, raising her.)—

Thou art my angel still! In all my woe,

Thy voice, thy heart, are for me! Farewell, Mabel!

There may be happier days for both of us! (Kisses her.)

And thou, my father! Heaven rain blessings on thee!

May'st thou n'er know the fiercer flame than fire

That burns within my breast! Farewell! farewell!

(Exit.)

(A pause.)

Sir H. (Faintly.) Edgar, my son—my son!

Jos.

Ho! Master Edgar!

Sir H. Gone!—he is gone!—

The angry clatter of his horse's hoofs—

Nay, nay; pursue him not!

(Trumpet sounds.)

The trumpet! ha!—

Come to your chamber, daughter! Widowed daughter!
Come, come.

(Assisting her off, aided by JOSEPH. Trumpet again.)

That thrilling sound hath victory in't!

Shame shall no longer bend our flying banners!

"God and the King!"

(Exeunt.)

SCENE 2. *In the Park. Enter JOSEPH.*

Jos. There! there they ride! And never went more gallant
Cavaliers a-field! Sir Henry leads them nobly! Gone! gone!
What pity—what pity that Master Edgar rides not with his father—
Master Edgar, his pride, his hope! But Sir Henry cursed him not—
nay, nay, he did not curse him! I could bear anything save that!

(Exit.)

SCENE 3.—*Night. Camp of CROMWELL. A flag over his tent—a red cross on field of blue. TROOPERS reclining by a fire, eating or smoking. A leathern tankard of ale standing near. A SENTINEL walking, with Bible.*

1st Trooper. Read! read!

2d Trooper. Let Cromwell find him so! The fields and woods
around, be the proper pages for a sentinel!

3d Trooper. Nay, mind him not, good Evil-shun, but read! Such
words do stir the soul within a man!

Sent. *(Reading by the fire light.)* "Lo! I will tread them in my
anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled
upon my garments!"

Enter EDGAR.

Who goes there? Stand and give the word!

Edgar. "The sword of Levi!"

Sent. Pass!

Edgar. Is Cromwell in his tent?

Sent.

Nay, but beyond the outposts;

Like holy Samuel, wrestling with the LORD:

Crying unto the LORD for Israel!

1st Trooper. Methinks he cometh!

2d Trooper. Yea, 'tis surely he! *(To SENTINEL.—Hide the book,
good Evil-shun!)*

Enter CROMWELL.

Crom. (To E GAR.) Right glad am I to welcome you again!
We ride together to the field to-morrow.

Edgar. Remember Winsley!

Crom. Well I may remember!
I lost my horse—and nearly lost myself!
That day, your timely rapier saved my life!

Edgar. Expose it not, I mean, to such wild odds,
For many lives are in it!

Crom. Where the LORD
Leads, do I follow! HE will rescue me
From all mine enemies! See yonder star,
Yon large, clear star, brighter than all the planets!
It shone upon my birth. From boyhood up,
Still has it varied with my changing fortunes,
Now dim, now glorious. Look! it shoots forth jets
Of purest light! No other star doth likewise!
Truly the LORD shall work great things to-morrow!

1st Trooper. (*Aside.*—Mark you the General? “Great things to-morrow!”)

2d Trooper. I pray that Marston Moor may end them! Truly would I be at home again, with wife and little ones!

3d Trooper. First win the right to stay in peace at home!

Edgar. (To CROMWELL.)

Stars have no influence on the lives of men!

Crom. Have not? May not the ETERNAL thus divulge
A portion of our fates? May not the Angel
Who ministers to me for righteousness,
Yonder preside? I do believe it, fully!

Edgar. 'Tis a mere dream: a fancy—like your Vision!

Crom. I saw the Vision!

(TROOPERS *listen eagerly.*)

Even as I now see you!

As clearly as mine ears receive your doubts,
So clearly came to me that wondrous voice!
Nor then alone. First, when I was a boy,
A wayward, headstrong, ill-conditioned school-boy.
It was a Sabbath night; I lay awake;

Plotting I know not what of morrow-mischief,
 When, suddenly, a strange and thrilling awe
 Stole over me! A pair of mighty wings,
 It seemed to me, spread forth! My very soul
 Was chilled! I would have cried aloud—my voice
 Had deadened into ice! I would have risen,
 And fled—I could not move! Yet was I bold
 Beyond my years, and feared nor man nor devil.
 The night was murky darkness—presently,
 A faint and ghastly light did fill the room!
 My curtains rustled—moved—were drawn apart—
 A tall and misty shape before me stood!
 I fainted not, though, ague-like, my flesh
 Did quiver—and the cold sweat, like a strand
 Of broken beads, fell fast from off my brow—
 And my hair bristled, as it were alive!
 I could have reckoned twenty, while the Shape
 Looked its majestic silence! Then a voice,
 Deep, slow, of strange and solemn harmony,
 Rolled forth without an effort: "Thou," it said,
 "Thou shalt be *First in England!*" And 'twas gone!

Edgar. Then you believe it? And the prophecy
 Directs your waking movements?

Crom. Wherefore not?
 The elder Brutus, he who made Rome free,
 Was called the First in Rome!

Edgar. (*Aside.*— It was a spirit—
 The Fiend—Ambition!)—
 Beware! I am not of the antique Roman,
 But did I know, as half I doubt even now,
 This Vision were the damnéd thirst for power,
 One day to urge your sacriligious hands
 Do violence upon our Country's freedom—
 There is so much of Cassius in my veins,
 That I would strike—yea! to your very heart!—
 Ere you should live to realize your dream!

(*Partly drawing his sword.*)

TROOPERS *start forward.*

Crom. (To TROOPERS.— Away! away!)
 What have I said? Woe! woe is me! The flesh
 Truly is weak, but strong, sincere the soul!
 Well hast thou spoken, friend, and right would'st do,
 If I were subject to the Evil One!
 Woe, woe is me, that so can be mistrusted!
 But THOU, LORD, knowest—THOU beholdest—yea!—
 Continue me, THOU MERCIFUL and MIGHTY!
 THINE instrument, and be THY Word my lamp!
 Even as I now am, thine, O LORD, thy servant!

(*Bursts into a passion of tears, with hysterical sobs.*)

Edgar. (*Aside.*—'Tis strange!)

Crom. (*Recovering, with a shudder.*)

Soh! Colonel, join your men forthwith!
 Go over once again your roll-call. See
 That all be right for early march. Report
 Your numbers at my tent in one hour's time.

(*Bows slightly, and crosses to Troopers. Exit Edgar.*)

(To 1st TROOPER.) Ho! Hezekiah Sin—despise, how fare ye?
 Deal the knave commissaries righteously?

1st Trooper. Yea! General, 'tis honest bread and meat! Wilt thou
 not taste, thyself, and judge how fares the rough-coated soldier?

2d Trooper. Take, eat! (*offering food on a wooden platter.*)—Eat,
 drink with us to-night, as we shall fight with thee upon the morrow!

Crom. Will I not?

(*Sits, and partakes heartily. Then fills a cup with ale.*)

(To 2d TROOPER.) 'Twere evil manners, shared I not with thee,
 Born-again Rumford!

(*Throws part of the contents of cup in the face of 2d TROOPER, and drinks
 the rest.*)

1st Trooper. Thou hast it there!

3d Trooper. Thou hast it fairly, Born-again!

Crom. I know not, truly,
 Whether this Rumford hath been born again,
 Either in flesh or spirit; but I know
 He is Baptized-again! Hey, Rumford? hey?

(To 1st TROOPER.)—Hand me a pipe of Trinidad!

(Takes a few quick puffs, rises, passes behind 3d TROOPER, and strikes the pipe on the rim of the man's corslet, the blazing ashes falling down his neck.)

3d Trooper. (Leaping up.)—Now may the devil —

Crom. Ho! Swarest thou?

(To 1st TROOPER.)—Write: Hezekiah Sin-despise, five shillings, For swearing. Thou shalt nevermore be known As Sin-despise, but Overcome-by-Sin! Our discipline must be preserved: I hate The vice of swearing, utterly, yea! utterly! But, some share of the fault was mine herein, And verily I will pay the fine myself.

(To 3d TROOPER.) Tush! tush! twist not thyself, man, to and fro, Nor grin as though it hurt thee!—

Methought my ironsides were proof 'gainst fire, As well as steel! Good rest, and early waking!

(Exit into tent.

1st Trooper. Cromwell! Cromwell!

2d Trooper. Long life to Cromwell!

3d Trooper. The LORD preserve him! Yea! for us and England!

(They lie down, and sleep.)

A pause.

Re-enter CROMWELL, standing before his tent.

Crom. Sleep, that dost mock the gilded couch of State,
And scorn the clutchings of the rich-man's arms,
How liest thou here, on the cloud-curtained earth,
Companion of the poor!

All grave and stern,
Like ghosts, the sentinels do stalk their rounds.
There shall, to-morrow, be another sleep,
For many—that shall need no sentinel!
For whom? The book is sealed, wherein our fate,
From scene to scene, even to the final act,
Is written: yet, unread, we follow it!
Discordant noises strike the heavy air;
The stamp of angry steeds, the clash of arms,

The rumbling wagons o'er the rugged road—
But hark! the battle-hymn of victory!

(*Sung without.*)

“Woe unto them that put their trust

In the Egyptian's crown—

His chariots and his horsemen,

His power and his renown!”

(*The hymn is followed by a shout, and that by another, from the opposite side.*)

Yea!——

Answer with drunken shouts the voice of faith!

Answer, ye persecutors of the Saints!

The red wine falling from your lifted cups

Like streams of blood—the blood of innocence,

Of babes and sucklings! Murderers! Ravishers!

Revilers of the prophets and the law!

Feast and carouse! Be merry while ye may:

Thy Kingdom, foolish King! hath passed away!

(*Stands, with elevated arm, in a reverie. EDGAR enters, approaches him, and gazes in wonder.*)

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE 1. *A cottage room. A scarlet Dragoon cloak flung over the settle, a high-crowned hat of dark grey felt, a buff belt, and sword. On the table a pair of pistols, a map, a telescope, a Bible, and a leader's truncheon. Steel armor in a large armed chair. CROMWELL discovered, his left arm, wounded, in a sling.*

Crom. Did'st thou say “King?” No, no! not “King!” not “King!”

The *First in England!* Have I foiled thee there?

Get thee behind me, Satan—prince of liars!

Tempt me no more! By the LORD's help, I scorn thee!

(*Walks the apartment. Pauses.*)

Who saith it was unreal? Have we not eyes—

Have we not ears? and shall we not believe

What we do see and hear? A spirit passed

Before the face of Job, and there was silence,

And then he heard a voice.—Through her of Endor,
 Did not the evil-minded Saul call up
 The living spirit of the buried prophet?—
 Brutus held converse with a royal shade.
 I, that was written down, ere time began,
 Predestinate to execute His wrath—
 May not I, too, commune with ministers
 That walk the earth at night? Go to! go to!

A pause.

“Cromwell, the *First in England!*”

(Crosses the room.)

And if it *had* said “King!”—
 Be there not tempters—be there not false prophets?
 Had it said “King,” then had I roused myself!
 Then had I striven with the Evil One,
 That he had fled me!—To the putting down,
 And not the raising up, of tyrants, came I!
 Not that to me should kneeling men exclaim,
 “Hail, Monarch!”—
 But that, throughout this goodly realm of England,
 Should innocence and righteousness prevail,
 And peace, and liberty, and truth, forever!

(Noise without. Challenge of a distant SENTINEL: “Who goes there?” It is repeated, nearer. A heavy rap on the door. CROMWELL resumes his studies at the table.)

Kingsland (without.)—The Captain of the Watch!

Crom. Enter the Captain of the Watch!

Enter KINGSLAND.

What now, good Kingsland?
 How goes it with the host of victory?

*Kings. Thanks to the GIVER of all mercies, well!
 Your wound, I fear me —*

Crom. Fear thee not at all.

’Tis a mere scratch! I would have given the arm,
 Yea! my right arm, for such a field as Marston!

Kings. ’Twas nobly fought—even by the Cavaliers!

Crom. Our victory still the nobler! Well, to business.

Kings. Here is one, without,
Even from the stronghold of the enemy,
Seeking to parley with you!

Crom. One from York?
Admit him speedily —

Kings. Nay, not from York;
Nor is it any *he*. A damsel, truly,
A damsel, decked with all the comeliness—
Truly, with all the loveliness of flesh!

Crom. Tush! tell not me of comeliness! Heaven's truth,
Kingsland, thou art a fool,
To rush upon my meditations here:—
A Jezabel—a painted, false Delilah!—
Cast her forth instantly!

Kings. It is not so,
It is not so, an' you will hear me out.
Nay, but a maiden of repute. She came
To speak with Cromwell of the youth, Ardenne.

Crom. Whom, of a truth, sincerely do I love.
Admit her. Stay! And bid them bring in wine,
And creature comforts.

(KINGSLAND opens the door.)

Kings. Enter!

(Enter MABEL, in riding cloak, with broad-leaved straw hat, tied down upon her cheeks. CROMWELL offers her a chair, which she declines.)

Crom. (To KINGSLAND.) Hold yourself aloof:
Eaves-dropping is a sin. See thou avoid it!

(Exit KINGSLAND.)

(To MABEL.) The night is chilly, though a Summer night,
And you have ridden far. I pray be seated.

(She again declines the chair, but removes her hat and mantle.)

(Enter SERVANT with wine, &c., then Exit.)

Will you partake of this, our sorry fare?
We are not often honored—

Mab. Nothing! nothing!
I have come hither in a fashion men
Would deem unmaidenly, and women bold—

Under the shade of night, and, save with menials,
Alone——

To you, the foeman of my family,
My King, my Country! Casting fear aside,
Incurring the contempt, the hate—perchance,
The curse, of those who are most dear to me!
Yet am I here, upheld by mine own conscience,
And firm in my resolve to hinder crime!
All other means have failed—tears, arguments,
Entreaties! All! I say. Then instantly
To horse! to horse! if you would save your friend,
Edgar Ardenne!

Crom. Edgar Ardenne!

Mab. A captive,
And doomed to die at daybreak!

Crom. What! to die!
No! for their souls they dare not! Did they harm
One hair of him, I would hang fifty up,
Yea, of their best and noblest, high as Haman!

Mab. He may be rescued, if you will it so!

Crom. How chanced his peril?

Mab. In their last retreat,
Made prisoner by the Cavaliers! Obey me—
To-night you save——him who would die for you!
Despise my warning, and you may, to-morrow,
Perchance—avenge him!

A pause.

Crom. Who are *you*, thus bold
For him who is the foeman of your tribe?

Mab. It matters not, or who, or what I am:
It matters only that you do obey me!

Crom. Nay, an' I know you not—your motives, too!—
I stir not, horse nor man! There be enow
Of dames and damoiselles—your loyal ladies!—
Who deem black falsehood angel-looking truth,
If so they may entrap the instrument,
Yea, the two-edgéd sword, of Heaven's high vengeance!

Mab. Not so! not so, by all my hopes hereafter!
 Thou may'st do ill that good may come of it;
 But I—for thousands such as thou—I *would* not!
 Not to destroy, I only aim to save—
 From a most cruel doom to save the young,
 From a most deadly crime to save the old!
 I am—then know it; use it as you list—
 Mabel Ardenne!

Crom. Ha! Mistress Mabel—is it?
 Adopted daughter of that fierce old Knight,
 Sir Henry! Most perverse and bloody-minded!
 Crimson with persecution of the Saints!
 Truly is this a sure and trusty witness!
 And so thou would'st preserve the youth—a valiant,
 And strong of hand he is, and stout of heart,
 Tender of conscience—yea, a shining light!—
 Thou would'st preserve him—and would'st wed with him—
 Ha! is it so?—and win him to the man
 Charles Stuart! Have I read your heart?

Mab. You *have* not!
 Not to restore my King his lawful throne,
 Not to restore to England peace and honor,
 Not to be empress of the universe,
 Would I espouse the man whose sad mistake,
 Or, still more sad, whose willful wrong, hath bound him
 With such as thee—a traitor to his monarch,
 His country, and—a hypocrite to God!
 It is for this that I would have him live,
 That I would have him live—perchance, repent:
 That I would spare the sin of slaying him
 To his own father!

Crom. What! His father! Speak,
 In Heaven's name, speak! Thou can'st not mean it so!

Mab. Sir Henry's captive—in the very act
 Of saving *him*—his captive! Doomed by him
 To perish!

Crom. Where lie these Cavaliers? What be their numbers?

Mab. Promise me, then, that, but to rescue *him*,
 You will not turn the tidings I may give
 To your own gain, or injury of the King ;
 That you will shed no drop of blood not needful ;
 That, *he* once safe, you strike no other blow,
 But hasten back, nor note nor vantage take
 For twelve hours' space.

Crom. Tush—tush ! It may not be !
 Answer me quickly, where and what their force ?

Mab. Promise !

Crom. Dally not, maiden—dally not, I say !
 Else be the blood of Edgar all on *thee*,
 Else *thine* the guilt of that insane old man !

Mab. Promise, or not a word from *me* ! I go,
 And Heaven, not thou, befriend them !

Crom. (*Stamping.*) I have said !
 It may not be ! Speak, girl, and tarry not !
 Without there, ho ! a guard and fetters !

Mab. Promise !
 Or you may tear me limb from limb—yet nothing :
 Promise—I tell you all.

Enter GUARD, with fetters. *A pause.* *Clock strikes two.*

But three hours more,
 And only will remain of him, your *friend*,
 A little blood-stained earth—for tears, or vengeance !

Crom. (*Relenting.*) Before the LORD, and by my hopes of grace,
 I promise thee ! Now answer : where ? how many ?

Mab. In the small town of Wetherby on Wharfe—
 Three hundred horse.

Crom. Sound trumpets—boot and saddle !
 Mine own first ironsides to horse ! Let all
 Bring petronels ! Despatch !
 Saddle me Thunder for the field ; myself
 Will head the troop ! Find me three trusty guides,
 That know each yard of country ten miles round !
 When all is ready, let the trumpet speak !
 For life ! for life !

Exit Guard. *Alarum.*

(To MABEL.) One word: Where hold they him?

Mab. The prison, nigh the river bank. And now
Forget me, and farewell!

Crom. Nay—nay, not so!
You go not hence, save with a fitting escort.

Mab. I must be there before, or all is lost!

Crom. Yea, thou art ever right. It shall be so.
Kingsland!

Enter KINGSLAND.

Conduct the maid to her attendants. Lady, (*Taking her hand.*)
Thou art a goodly and a glorious creature,
And this night hast thou done a worthy deed!

A soldier's blessing—

Although he be not of thy faith nor faction,
Cannot disgrace nor harm thee. Fare-thee-well!

(*Releasing her hand suddenly, goes to the table and intently scans the map.*)

Mab. (*Aside.*—A man of wonders! Good and evil share him!
Opposing spirits—which the victory?
But no! the traitor has no hope on Earth—
And Heaven is *Virtue's* crown!—The deed is done;
His will and act are wedded: they are one!)

Exit with KINGSLAND.

Crom. Her Majesty, as doubting this our England—
Hath gone to Holland—noble Digby with her,
Still the consoling friend! And yet she loves us;
For was it not in token of her love
She bore away the jewels of the Crown,
To gaze upon them, and remember England?—
Nay, but she pawned them all, for arms and men!
That, too, was kindly meant: her advocates
Were most unwise, to undertake her cause
Without such preparation as the time
And seriousness require. Her Royal Husband,
When he can make his mind to't, bravely fights,
But ever lacks discretion: Witness *here!*

(*Snatching a letter from the table.*)

I would have saved him—*him!* the man Charles Stuart!
 I labored for him to my soul's extent!
 I saw him—offered certain propositions,
 Which, signed, would bring to England peace again:
 He signed! He *lied!*—
 This letter, written by his faithless hand,
 Was on its way to Holland—to the Queen!
 Her Majesty may look in vain to read it!
 What devilish words are here!

(*Reads.*)

“For the present, I *seem*, for my own purposes, to favor the army.
 In the end, whoso bids the highest has me. You disapprove, you
 tell me, my ‘promising so much to that villain, Cromwell.’ Now, I
 beseech you, be not alarmed nor troubled; but leave *me* to manage,
 who am informed far better of all circumstances than you, by any
 means, can be; in due season I shall know how to deal with this
 rogue, *who, for a silken garter, shall be fitted with a hempen rope!*”
 Whose dogs are we, that shall be dealt with so?
 As the LORD liveth, he shall die the death!

(*Trumpet sounds.*)

Farewell awhile, mine enemy: my *friend*,
 Thy rising glory shall have glorious end!
 Ho! to the rescue!

(*Puts on his armor. Scene closes.*)

SCENE 2. *Prison at Wetherby on Wharfe. Enter EDGAR, in chains.*

Edgar. Pale Morning steals upon the sorrowing Night,
 Soon with her golden wand to touch the world,
 And wake its melancholy dream to glory!
 To me it brings no cheering! All is lost!
 O willingly, O gladly to my doom,
 My doom pronounced by thee, I go, my father,
 Giving my life a sacrifice for thine—
 Yet would I hear thy blessing ere I die,
 Yet would I look upon thee at the last!
 Why linger in the world? Its promises
 Are false—but Mabel lives! though not for me:

Her love, her duty, her religion circled
 Within the fatal round of loyalty.—
 But England lives!—Yea, by her children wounded,
 Her beauty, by the Gorgon frown of War,
 Transformed to pitiless stone!

(*Bell tolls.*)

Strike! strike! I fear not!

Thy voice is only terrible to crime——
 To me 'tis music!

(*Alarum without.*)

What! another charge?

(*Leaping up.*) For England! England! Let me die for England!

Enter CROMWELL and others. The chains of EDGAR are removed.

Crom. For England live! For England and for me!
 Mount, and away!

(*Exeunt. Retreat sounded.*)

SCENE 3. *Apartment of CROMWELL. Enter SIR HENRY, wounded, and supported by two of Cromwell's SOLDIERS.*

Sir H. Edgar is safe!

1st Soldier. Yea, even in our camp, with Cromwell.

Sir H. Safe! safe!

2d Soldier. Here, rest thee on the settle.

Sir H. Is it the bell? Why tolls it so, to-night?

1st Soldier. He wanders.

2d Soldier. He is wounded, grievously.

1st Soldier. Yea, mind and body, both. Truly I pity him!

2d Soldier. 'Twas marvelous how he fought!

1st Soldier. Like an old lion! Three or four of our Troopers, yea, the best among us, went reeling before his blade. But it had gone hard with him, at last, save for Cromwell's order to make him prisoner!

2d Soldier. And that, verily, was no easy task! If the other Cavaliers had met us so bravely, our journey had been bootless!

Sir H. Dead! he is dead!

1st Soldier. Nay, safe with Cromwell. Look!

Enter EDGAR.

Edgar. Father!

Sir H. Is it so? My son! (*Embracing him.*)

Edgar. (To 1st SOLDIER.) Summon a surgeon!

1st *Soldier.* One hath already seen him.

Edgar. What hope?

1st *Soldier.* None!

Sir H. 'Tis he! 'Tis he, at last!

My boy, my own boy, Edgar! Grieve not so!

For I am glad to die—*your* arms about me!

Much would I say—I cannot! Pardon us, (To SOLDIERS.)

We have not met for long—would fain be private—

A little—ere we part—forever!

(*Exeunt* SOLDIERS.)

Are we alone?

Edgar. We are alone, dear father.

Sir H. A sorrowful—a happy meeting, Edgar!

I ask you not—I feel—that you forgive

The cruel—the unmanly——

Edgar. Speak not thus—

Say only, that you pardon ——

Sir H. No! no! no!

I will not—do not! I have nought to pardon!

You were my joy, my pride, my lone heart's refuge,

Till this accurséd, this unnatural war

Rushed over us, and tore our lives asunder!

I, too, was mad!

Edgar. It was my duty, father,

Still to obey you, still to bear with you—

Sir H. Not so!

'Tis man's first duty to obey his conscience!

And I was but a merciless old fool,

That would not even hear you! Nay, far more:

I would have slain you, but for that sweet girl—

Slain *you*—that, only for your self-devotion,

Had come not in my power!—

Your quietude, your peace of mind, *is* slain!

Your hope of fireside happiness! I robbed you,

Yea, even of the dwelling of your fathers!—

But no! there still is strength enough for *this*—

(*Taking the deed from his vest, and tearing it.*)

If all my wrongs could thus find reparation—

Edgar. Peace, dear father, peace!

Sir H. The storm is not yet spent! That cup!—and hear me.

(*Drinks.*)

Much more of sin than this! I murdered Mabel!

Edgar. (*Aside.*—His mind is clouded!)

Sir H. Nay, I read your look!

I murdered her! Have I not, day by day,
Like a poor flower beneath the early frost,
The blight of her affections, seen her fade?
Yet ever patient, ever angel-like,
More pure, more holy in her loveliness!—
Thou, too, my son, wilt live a lonely life;
Thou wilt not droop before the spite of fortune,
But, like the last oak of a Druid grove,
Magnificent and stately wilt remain;
Yet in thy dignity companionless,
The worm still gnawing at thy noble heart!
No, No! thou can'st not—can'st not pardon me!

Edgar. It is the work of Heaven! The LORD hath willed it!

If *you* have erred, you have in honor erred;
But never, for a moment, have I felt
Wrath, bitterness, or any feeling else,
Save love and reverence for *you*, my father!
If there be aught—and yet I hate the word—
For which you need forgiveness from a child—
With all my heart, with all my soul, I bless you!

Sir H. And *you*—Heaven bless you, Edgar, even as *I* do!

It will—it must! (*They embrace.*)

Mabel, your song is wondrous sweet to-night—
But why so sad? It should be gay as summer,
After this blessed union!—Ah! I dream!
Is it late, Edgar?

Edgar. Morning, Sir, is breaking.

Sir H. It is not morning! Lo! the moonlight comes,
Like Heaven's forgiveness to a sinner's bosom!

When I am gone, say to poor Mabel—say,
 My sole regret
 Was that I could not join her hand with yours !
 She *will* be yours now, now this war is over—
 'Tis over :—and I mourn not the result :
 The King hath dealt with insincerity ;
 Weak, obstinate, and prejudiced—the wrong
 Is all his own ! Such King-craft, out upon it !
 Enough !—She *will* be yours ; you *will* be happy !—
 How soothing is the nightingale's sad song !

Enter MABEL, who kneels beside SIR HENRY.

How beautiful ! 'Tis done. My angel waits,
(*Seeing MABEL.*)

To bear me upward—upward ! List ! but no !
 The bird hath ceased its song ! The moon hath set !
 'Tis time to die !

(Dies.)

SCENE 4.—MILTON'S Garden, before the Cottage. *Enter MILTON, leaning on the arm of ANDREW.*

And. Yea, the floor and gallery of Westminster were crowded—
 and verily *this* day more than any ; and a marvelous show was it, of
 bright steel armor, and the vanity of rich, rustling silk, and the nod-
 ding of plumes, and sparkling of diamonds !

Mil. What show of reverence by the King, good Andrew ?

And. None, Master Milton—none ! either by glance or sign !
 Still did he deny the authority of the Court, answering that “ he
 valued not the charge a rush ! ”

Mil. Ay, but he shall ! 'Tis England's charge !

And. And the *sentence* of England !

Mil. Is *that* pronounced ?

And. He dies !

Mil. 'Tis just !—

Happy for England ! happy for the world !
 Thank Heaven the Judges of that wondrous Court
 Were equal to the task—their country's right—
 And freedom's ! Far away, in time to be,
 Pale nations, that have drunk their own hot tears,

Crouching beneath the frown of cruel Kings,
 Shall hear the voice of England, and arise!
 Charles Stuart shall descend to history
 A poor, weak man, but dangerous withal!
 He would have torn and cast into the flame
 Our England's Constitution; would have reigned
 Uncurbed by Parliaments; he would have wielded
 The nation's sword with *one* hand, with the other
 The vast resources of her treasury;
 Yea! mould the Church into an instrument
 And weapon of despotic government!

And. Verily, all this, but for Master Cromwell!

Mil. How spoke the multitude upon the sentence?

And. They shouted "Justice!" "Vengeance!" and "Away with him!" One did offer to strike—

Mil. To *strike!* It was unworthy of a *man!*

Even the unforgiving Law, the will
 And majesty of millions, strikes with pity,
 And tears do rust the axe!

And. Truly, love I not the King, yet would I have fought for him then! But a strong arm was upon the coward knave—yea! in a moment—that of Cromwell!

Mil. Right! Like himself! And like an Englishman!

Let us go in. I cannot walk to-day:

My heart, too full for words, can only pray!

(Exeunt into Cottage.)

SCENE 5. *A grand apartment in the Palace of Whitehall. Upon an elevation adorned with crimson curtains, ostrich plumes, and the gold-blazoned arms of England, is seen a coffin, partly covered with a black pall. Several tall silver candle-sticks around the room, with lighted waxen torches. STEPHENSON and BOWTELL (Sentinels) passing and re-passing each other at intervals.*

Step. 'Tis a long night and a cold!

Bow. Very cold!

Step. We are alone in all this palace!

Bow. Except—*(Pointing to the coffin.)*

Step. How silent it is!

Bow. Very silent!

Step. You were at the beheading?

Bow. I was.

Step. He died like a King!

Bow. Had he lived like one, he had not died to-day!

Step. What, think you, is the hour?

Bow. It grows colder: it must be near the morning.

Hark! (*Clock strikes three.*) Three.

Step. What more gloomy than a clock in an empty house—
striking on! striking on! Can aught be more gloomy?

Bow. Yea, that! (*Looking toward the coffin.*) Which is silent!

Step. In truth, you are worse than either!

Bow. I like not this watching! (*Footsteps heard.*)

Step. What noise is that? Footsteps! Through the hall!

Bow. They cross the next saloon! The door!

(*SENTINELS level their weapons toward the door.*)

Step. Stand ho! the word!

Bow. Stand!

Enter CROMWELL; a small waxen taper in his right hand, in his left a staff of ebony.

Crom. "Justice and Liberty!"

You keep good watch. Cold work, I trow, and cheerless!

What say you to a flagon of October—

Hey! Stephenson? hey! Bowtell? So! so! so!

Ye are on duty, would ye answer: well—

I will relieve ye for a little space—

(*They both offer to go.*)

One at a time, one only!—Stephenson,

Give me thy carabine. Now get thee down

Quick to the buttery; and quick return,

To take bluff Bowtell's place.

(*Exit STEPHENSON.*)

(*CROMWELL watches his departure, then stands the carabine in a corner, and walks, with stately step to the coffin.*)

He hath not broken on thy watch to-night!

He hath not waked to scare ye!

Bow. Now may the LORD forbid!

Crom. You look, in truth, as if he *had* walked forth
In his untimely shroud! But fear not, Bowtell!
The King sleeps well, and *shall* sleep, till the Day
When the great trumpet, to a mightier judgment,
Shall summon him—and to a darker doom!
Have they made fast the coffin? I would see him.

Bow. See him!

(CROMWELL throws back the pall, and tries to raise the lid; it resists.)

He applies the ferule of his staff; it breaks.)

Crom. Lend me thy rapier. The hilt will move it.

(The lid being thus violently opened, he stands for a time, speechless,
before the body.)

He sleeps, indeed!—he sleeps, how peacefully!
Those eyes shall flash no more with Kingly pride;
That lip be wreathed no more with haughtiness!
The brain, that plotted so much woe to England—
The indomitable mind, that would not swerve
One hair-breadth from its purpose—not for life! —
Are these, too, in repose, like that cold lip,
That nerveless and inanimate right hand?
Is *that* sleep dreamless?——
Or hath it wakened from this horrid trance,
After the turmoil of mortality,
To peace, to consciousness, to wisdom, life
Eternal? *Dost thou know, thou icy form,*
Who stands beside thee? He who strove against
Thy tyranny! Who beat thy banner down,
And in a whirlwind swept thy Cavaliers!
Who plucked thy glory from the glittering throne,
And paved thy path to that still hostelry—
The grave! Thou dost not start!——

I do but dream!

The King is nothing! Thus, of old, 'twas written:

“Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the Kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee—Art thou also become

weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? * * *
 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!
 how art thou cut down, which did'st weaken the nations!"

Thus was it written of a mightier one;
 Thus hath it been of thee! Thy place is empty;
 Thy country knows thee not! A thousand years—
 And still asleep! And when thou shalt awake,
 Thou wilt have nothing, fallen great-one, nothing
 To testify 'gainst me! Thine own self-will,
 Thine own tyrannical and senseless folly,
 Thine own oppressing of the Saints; thy trampling
 On delicate and tender consciences—
 Nay! more than all, thy treachery to friends,
 To those who would have been thy faithful servers—
 'Twas *this!*

Thou might'st have still sat in thy fathers' place,
 Might'st have outshone them! —

A pause.

But for the axe, he *had* lived many years!

Another pause.

Whom the LORD listeth to destroy—he dies!
 Then say not that *I* slew thee!—

(Replaces the lid.)

Farewell on earth forever! —
 Strangely we met—and wonderfully part!
 Sleep till the trumpet, LAST OF ENGLAND'S KINGS!

(Replaces the pall.)

(During CROMWELL'S speech, BOWTELL remains standing near him, gazing alternately on the living and the dead, with his hand still outstretched as when he received back his sword. Re-enter STEPHENSON, who also gazes on CROMWELL. Withdrawing a pace or two, CROMWELL wraps his cloak closely round him, and remains in thought.

A vision appears.

Several shadowy figures of Kings and Queens cross the stage. As each enters, the SPIRIT holds a crown over its head, for a moment. More are about to pass. CROMWELL looks on, with astonishment and disappointment; the SENTINELS gazing with new wonder on him.)

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Room in MILTON'S Cottage. MILTON occupies an arm-chair.*

ELIZABETH seated on a stool at his feet, with writing materials.

Eliz. (To the pen.—Tarry a little, pluméd pilgrim, tarry !
Where never ventured mortal thought before—
Through Heaven's delight—through Eden's happy bloom—
Thou goest—and the haunted halls of Hell !
I long, but dread, to venture forth with thee !)

Mil. 'Tis here at last—the dream of sorrowing years—
The dream that shall not die ! The war grows dim ;
Its thunders mingle with the circling sea ;
The winds do scatter them. They are no more.
Write :

“ Of man's first disobedience—and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree—whose mortal taste—
Brought death into the world—and all our woe—
With loss of Eden——”

(*He hesitates. ANDREW appears at the door. ELIZABETH motions him off.*)

Andrew—Is it not ?

Eliz. Thine ear is quick to know ! (To ANDREW.—Away ! away !)

Mil. Nay, let him enter. England is not Eden !
And Andrew's coming calls me home again !
Some other day, my daughter. Thanks for this !

(*As she is going.*)

How fares our guest ? I did, ere now, intend
To ask of her !

Eliz. Poor Mabel ! Sadly ! sadly !
She will not stay with us, I fear—

Mil. Why not ?
Most welcome is she, for her own sweet sake,
As well as Edgar's !

Eliz. She will go—to Heaven !

Mil. Where broken hearts shall win their music back ;
Where love-dividing war shall never come !
Say that she must, to please a poor old man,
Learn a gay lesson from the snow-birds yonder,

And chirp a little, though it *be* the winter !
 And say, moreover, I've invented lately,
 For her, a simple, soothing harmony,
 Which, ere the dark, the organ may reveal.

Eliz. Right gladly will I do my best to cheer her !

Mil. Ay, from thy own good heart !

And. (*To ELIZABETH.*) I came straightway from Mistress Mabel :
 and truly do I think she doth desire thy company ; but ever with—
 “ I would, an' if she can, conveniently ! ”—and—“ Ask her hither, if
 you will, good Andrew ! ”—and—“ Ask her not ; perchance she
 writeth now ! ”—so that I scarcely know *what* thing to ask !

Mil. Kind and considerate girl !

Eliz. And ever so,

Even to the overmuch !

And. Verily, I say she is an angel ! (*To MILTON.* In thy “Paradise,” let her be one of the shining band—save, only, with such brightness, could it not be “Paradise *Lost* ! ”)

Eliz. Ah, Andrew ! if thou flatterest so the fair,
Thyself may grace the book : the *Tempter*, Andrew !

Exit, laughing.

And. Then will I get me at once to my apple-tree !

Exit.

Mil. England ! still England ! ——
 England was tottering on the brink of ruin :
 And Cromwell rescued her from tyranny !
 Then anarchy, vice, folly, misery strove—
 And Cromwell, from the mastership of millions,
 Yet worse than his who died at Whitehall—saved her !
 Never was liberty so well secured,
 Justice so equal, as they are to-day !
 England ! ——
 Defender of the right, in every clime ;
 Mistress of Ocean ! Wheresoe'er they be,
 Wandering throughout the world, her sons' broad shield,
 By the mere shadow of her mighty name !
 Such *now* is England ! Such is *Cromwell's* England !
 I cannot praise too much this wondrous man !

I know him! What? the Parliament? 'Twas needful!
 They liberated, to enslave again!
 They *should* be driven from their usurpation!
 They *were*! He did it, bravely! What? Ambition?
 No! the true lover of his Country, only—
 Not of himself! His glory is his Crown!

Enter ANDREW hastily.

And. Come, Master Milton! I pray thee, come!

Mil. Whither?

And. Dear Mistress Mabel—(*weeps.*)

Mil. Dying? *Is* it so?

And. Yea!

Mil. Hath any sent for Master Edgar?

And. Truly.

Mil. Not *my* discordant touch: to-night she hears

The God-attuned music of the spheres! *Exeunt.*

SCENE 2.—*Chamber in the Palace, well lighted.* CROMWELL, *magnificently dressed, slowly pacing the floor.* Bible, Sword of State and golden Sceptre lying on a table, with various papers, held in place by a dagger. A chime of bells. *Rejoicing, without.*

Crom. Send forth your merry chimes, ye high-swung bells!

Answer them, cannon, from your blazing throats!

Huge bonfires, dim the stars! From street to street,

Let torches fly. From every casement shine,

Tapers and lights! Ay, feast ye, and carouse,

To Cromwell! Cromwell! What is *he*? A man—

Weary and full of grief!—The LORD PROTECTOR!

'Tis something! THIS! and THIS! 'Tis England's glory!

(*Taking alternately the Sword and Sceptre.*

A slight noise heard.)

What?

(*Starts—places his hand in his bosom—examines the room—listens.*
Re-assured, sits down at the table.)

The soldier of a hundred fields—afraid!

Yea, in his palace, all encased in steel,

And armed—to fight with shadows! *Be* they so?

(*Turning over the pile of papers.*)

Threats from assassins! hints from hidden friends,
 Dwellers in every Court! Despatches, here—
 And letters intercepted! *Be they shadows?*

(Taking up a pamphlet.)

“KILLING NO MURDER!” ’Tis a pleasant title!

(Reads. Closes the pamphlet.)

The perilous and subtle-minded villain!

Damnably arguments!—

(Rising again; paces the floor.)

And my own muster-roll contains the name
 Of many a Brutus, who would free his Country—
 By what? My secret murder!—’Tis a lie!
 A wickéd lie, but framed to break my rest!
 My own brave ironsides?—Yet will I watch!
 Trust *none!* Even Harrison is cold, of late!
 And Fleetwood thwarts me! Hacker, once my friend,
 Is now my bitter foe! The snares are set!
 Pitfalls are digged for me, and arrows whetted!
 And wherefore! Who in England have I wronged?
 They cannot charge me with bloodthirstiness,
 For, to a fault, have I been merciful.
 I will be so no longer! Slingsby, first,
 To trial! Hewit, then! And if condemned,
 As the LORD liveth, shall they die!—

(Kneels, the Bible in his left hand and the Sword in his right.)

O THOU!

THOU hast forsaken me! THY minister
 Did warn me of THY pleasure; I arose
 To do THY work, and THOU did’st prosper me!
 Lo! by *my* hand did’st THOU strike down the King!
 Lo! by *my* hand the fallen realm was raised!
 And THOU hast made me, as THY promise was,
 THE FIRST IN ENGLAND!—to abandon me!
 Let not my blood, which, ever, at THY bidding,
 Flowed freely, by a murderer be shed!
 But let me die when THOU, hast done with me,
 In fullness of my fame; yea! die in peace!—

Or gallantly upon my charger's back,
Amid the blast of trumpets!—

(*A step is heard, without, and a low tap at the door. CROMWELL rises, lays down the Bible, and advances.*)

Ho! what there?

Enter GUARD.

Guard. A stranger is below, craving to speak in private with your Highness on matters of great import.

Crom. What like is he? *A stranger!* Tall and pale—
A scar upon his cheek—the right; a mantle
Of blue—with cape of red; slouched hat; red feather?

Guard. Even so, your Highness!

Crom. His right hand gloved—resting upon the hilt
Of a long tuck—and, on the left-hand fingers,
Three rings?

Guard. Of a truth, I observed not——

Crom. Begone then, instantly, demand his name:
Not that it matters—mark his hands, I tell thee—
They *should* be as I said. A plain gold hoop
On the forefinger of the left—a seal,
Cornelian; with a guard of jet, the next.
If it be so,
Say I will go no further in that business,
But send one to confer with him to-morrow,
Three hours past noon—the place he wots of. Hence!
Yet stay! If *not* so—take him to the Gatehouse,
And hold him there, at peril of your life!
Trouble me not, in either case, to-night.

Exit GUARD.

(*CROMWELL draws from different parts of his attire three pistols, and examines the flints and priming. Then extinguishes all the lights save one, carefully locks the door, and opens a panel in the wainscoting.*)

This pain!—

(*Placing his hand on his heart. A pause.*)

O the proud privilege of eminence!
I may not even sleep where last I slept,
But, like a thief, must grope along the dark,
In secret ways, unto a secret chamber!

Exit through panel.

SCENE 3. *A corridor of the palace. Enter two SOLDIERS; R.*

1st Soldier. And this you know, of a truth?

2d Soldier. I do.

1st Soldier. The lady is a comely one, good faith—a lady with a father, too! Cromwell's daughter need not go a-begging!

2d Soldier. Though Sir Edgar *did* decline her ladyship!

1st Soldier. It passes!

2d Soldier. Bethink thee: Mistress Mabel, his betrothed, so lately dead!

1st Soldier. And what of *that*! Shall a young man, yea, and a man marked out for great affairs! shall *he* go sighing like a country clown, in sooth, for a lost love, when he may find another and a better—and *that* the daughter of my Lord Protector!

2d Soldier. Ne'erless, 'tis sober certainty! And more than this: thereupon, Sir Edgar left England!

1st Soldier. Left England! Truly, then is the land lighter by *one* fool!

2d Soldier. An' you *will* speak so, whisper!

1st Soldier. I care not! I! Whither went he?

2d Soldier. 'Tis said, to Holland.

1st Soldier. What madness made him go?

2d Soldier. Draw near: Cromwell's!

1st Soldier. How?

2d Soldier. Sir Edgar thinks him tainted with ambition—that he would be King!

1st Soldier. King? An' if he would, he had been so, long since!

2d Soldier. Still, may it not be in his thought?

1st Soldier. Truly, his thought is on a Crown above this sinful world. And he may wear it soon! Hast thou not seen how pale and sad he grows?

2d Soldier. His daughter's death—Lady Elizabeth's—doth so affect him, for verily he loved her with a passing love! And then the manner of her death! I heard her shriek: "Blood! blood!" till all Hampton Court did ring with her wild raving! "Blood!" she cried, "I float, I smother in a sea; a sea of human blood! Who comes? who comes? red with the gore of monarchs? Father?—*not* father—no—no—O not *my* father!" Then I saw Cromwell tremble—ay, the strong warrior shake! But this will pass anon.

1st Soldier. All England's weight on his single shoulders, as, in sooth, it is, would crush a giant. A giant was he, once; but that Scottish ague struck severely! These plots, too, even against his life—these secret villains!—do work upon his heart. With *that*, falls all!

2d Soldier. I pray it be not so!

1st Soldier. I join your prayer! For verily hath he done great things for England!

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE 4. *Chamber in the Palace.* CROMWELL *lying on a couch.* Around him stand MILTON and ANDREW, a PHYSICIAN, WIFE and TWO DAUGHTERS of Cromwell, SOLDIERS, and ATTENDANTS. *Night.* A storm of rain and hail, with thunder and lightning at intervals.

Phys. (To MILTON.—

The struggle has been long. His hour is come!)

Mil. Hast thou informed him this?

Phys. I have, but vainly.

Ever he answers—

Crom. (*Partly rising.*) Keep them all away!

Keep them away! What would they with me now?

I am not ready! No! I *will* not die!

The Spirit of KING CHARLES slowly enters.

Away! Why dost thou glare on *me*? King? King?

There be *no* Kings in England!—

Beseech me not, I say—I cannot save thee!—

It falls! it falls! that deadly-gleaming axe!

Said I not so? There be *no* Kings in England!

(*Exit KING.*)

'Tis gone! What dream was this?—

Mil. Be calm, I prithee!

Crom. Ha! Blind John Milton! Come! thy hand! thy hand!—

I, too, am in the dark!—

I love thee! Thou hast served our England well!

Thy words were mighty! Europe heard, and trembled—

Yea, Kings upon their thrones!

Enter the SPIRIT, bearing a Crown.

What! Devil! thou!

Thou who did'st break upon my childish sleep!

Thou who did'st say: "Hail Cromwell! First in England!"

Thou who did'st plunge my stainless soul in blood—
 My King's—my people's—yea! my own dear child's!
 "Blood! blood! I float—I smother in a sea!"
 Dost thou not hear her?—What! the Crown! the Crown!

(Leaps from the Couch.)

'Tis mine! I won it on the battle-field!

'Tis mine! I won it—

(Grasps toward the Crown. The SPIRIT moves it away.)

Nay! it is mine own!

Not by the axe! no! no! 'twas *not* the axe!

In war I won it—peace I won it—truth—

And liberty, and glory!

(Exit SPIRIT. A peal of thunder.)

Cannon! Charge!

Charge down upon them, with your conquering pikes!

For England! "Let the LORD arise!"—

(They remove CROMWELL back to the Couch.)

The King!

How peacefully he sleeps! how peacefully!

A pause.

What day is this?

Mil. The Day of Cromwell!—

Dunbar!

Crom. Dunbar! The Fortunate! Look up!

See'st thou my planet? Edgar—where is Edgar?

He saw it blaze upon the battle-night!

Another pause.

(A crash of thunder, with vivid lightning.)

On! on! Have at thee! What, again? Dismounted!

Ho! rescue! Lost! Ardenne! help! resc—

(Dies.)

THE END.







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